

"WAITING TO EXHALE"

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and

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2nd Revision

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"WAITING TO EXHALE"

FADE IN

1 EXT. DESERT - DAY

1

Empty desert. Endless.

We HEAR a woman's BREATH, as waves of hot sand rise up from the desert floor, blowing into CAMERA, and wiping FRAME to...

2 EXT. DESERT - ANGLE ON THE SIDE OF A MOVING CAR - DAY

2

A black woman behind the wheel. Passes right by the Red Concrete Monument which marks the site of Four Corners of the U.S. We hear faint sound of soul music on the radio...

ANGLE TO FRONT OF CAR

SAVANNAH JACKSON appears to be moving toward CAMERA.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

The deal is. The men in Denver are dead.

She's serious. Been there. Not about to go back.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

No wonder I'm changing towns. Again.

Once again the sound of a woman's breath causes the sand to WIPE FRAME to...

3 INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

3

BERNADINE HARRIS hands ice cream cones to her well-dressed children, JOHN JR. (9) and ONIKA (6), then shepherds them in a rushed manner as she comes toward the CAMERA.

BERNADINE (VOICE OVER)

Got thirty two minutes to get the loan docs to John, the kids to Chuck E Cheese, and my behind to the church committee meeting.

ANGLE IN PARKING LOT

Onika bumps into Bernadine. Gets ice cream on her Escada suit. Onika feels bad. Bernadine pretends not to be annoyed, wipes her daughter's face softly, then her suit briskly.

BERNADINE (VOICE OVER)

I'd clone myself. But I wouldn't have time for the surgery.

As Bernadine releases the alarm on a black 750i BMW, we HEAR the woman's breath. SAND WIPE to...

4 INT. HEALTH CLUB - EVENING

4

ROBIN STOKES, a sex symbol of sorts, walks toward CAMERA in a rhythmic fashion, wearing a unitard, fully aware of three handsome black men ga-gaaing over her as she puts down dumbbells, wipes sweat from her brow. She likes this attention. Used to it.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

I don't know why I always pick the wrong men to fall in love with.

Feeling the men's eyes on her ass. Sways her hips enough to rock them. There.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

My weakness. Is pretty boys. With big sticks.

The woman's breath. SAND WIPE to...

5 INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

5

GLORIA MATTHEWS pushing a cart full of Pepis quickly down aisle, dropping giant bags of potato chips, popcorn, pork rinds, and salsa, etc., inside. A few more steps toward CAMERA. Now tosses in doughnuts, cookies, Entemann's coffee cake. We SEE NEW YEAR'S EVE paraphernalia everywhere...

6 EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

6

ANGLE ON her walking through electronic doors, holding bags to her chest, still coming toward CAMERA. She's short of breath.

GLORIA (VOICE OVER)

I don't know why Tarik has to spend New Year's Eve with his homies when he sees them everyday and plus there's gonna be all these drunk fools in the streets.

Sets bags inside back seat of her Volvo. Wipes sweat from forehead...

GLORIA (VOICE OVER)

He'd have more fun at home with me watching videos.

WIPE TO BLACK. Cards of main titles over which credits continue and we HEAR OVERLAPPING with each other...

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

I don't believe in New Year's resolutions. They're stupid. I promise this year I will not spend another birthday alone. Another Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas...

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Our New Year's Eve countdown is underway.
You're our ninth caller...

FEMALE CALLER (O.S.)
Willie? If you're listening, I want you
to know that Peaches still love you. And
I dedicate 'Distant Lover' by Marvin Gaye
to you. Come on home, baby.

...as the song plays...

BERNADINE (VOICE OVER)
...no matter what John says, this year
I'm starting my catering business.
There's gotta be something in this damn
life I'm doing just for me...

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)
...And if I do ever let Russell come
back, I'm gonna whip something on him so
tough he'll have to marry me. Or else
just forget it. I mean it. This time...

GLORIA (VOICE OVER)
...I'm gonna lose ten pounds and eat
right.
(beat)
Fifteen pounds...

Now the women's resolutions OVERLAP completely so that the
words become indistinguishable. This babble of hopes and
frustrations CONTINUES through the credits, to the point
where it becomes really funny, as the SAND wipes to...

7 INT. SAVANNAH'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

7

Savannah in her robe. At the mirror. Making her face with
care.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
For all of you lovers out there who'll be
wrapped in each other's arms tonight...
the countdown continues with a little
something to increase the heat... Keith
Washington's Kissing You!

Eyeliner. Slow. With one hand to steady the other.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)
Here it is New Year's, and I'm geeked up
for a blind date that's not even that.

Slight shake of her head.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

Just some party this guy's voice invited
my answering machine to when we got worn
out playing phone tag.

Shadow now. Magenta.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

A long time ago. I asked God to send me
a decent man. I got Robert, Cedric,
Darrell and Kenneth. God's got some
serious explaining to do.

Lipstick. Bright and very red.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

So my prayers got more detailed. Like
how about...some compassion. Some
confidence as opposed to arrogance...

Studies her final face. We like it. She never quite does.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

Could he have a sense of purpose...a
sense of integrity... even half a sense
of humor...?

Reaches for the fancy bottle of body cream. Her face set
into her thoughts is tight and unforgiving. She swirls out
some cream and smooths it up and down her legs, working it in
until it disappears. Even her mind's voice drops with...

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

Could he listen?

She stands now. Shrugs off her robe. Stares at her body in
a slinky slip.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

The truth is, most men are deaf.

Walks back out into the room.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

They prefer to guess what you need. But
they don't guess worth shit.

A dress is laid out across the bed. Even empty, it looks
hot. She sits next to it, pulling on panty hose.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

They lie without a conscience...

Stands up. Wiggles herself all the way in.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED: (2)

7

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)
What they're best at. Is convincing us
we should feel desperate.

Steps into the dress now, pulls it halfway up. A sigh...

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)
Thank God I don't fall for that shit.

Stares at herself in the full-length mirror. A long, hard,
brutally honest stare. Wrinkles her nose.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)
If I had the nerve, I'd buy me some real
breasts.

Pulls the straps up. She looks damn good. Either she
doesn't notice, or it doesn't cheer her...

...her shoes are waiting. She steps into them, carefully.
What flickers across her face is, for the first time, a shade
of sadness...

...the phone RINGS. She just looks at it.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)
I know that's got. To be Mama. No one
else knows I'm at a hotel.

It rings again.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)
She's convinced I'm out here dying of
loneliness...

Trace of pain in the eyes. The air comes out of her.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)
I love her to death. But tonight...

The phone stops. Whispers to herself...

SAVANNAH
I'll call you in the morning, Ma.

Eyes linger on the phone. Then, she picks up her bag. One
last doubt-filled gaze at the mirror.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)
God. If this man isn't The One. At
least let me dance 'til I sweat.

Ready as she's gonna get. Strides OUT OF FRAME. We HEAR her
heels.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED: (3)

7

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)
Hell, let me feel something.

8 INT. BERNADINE'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

8

Bernadine in silk robe. Putting in hot rollers.

FEMALE CALLER (O.S.)
Gino baby this is Felicia reaching out to touch! Happy New Year's to my Louisiana hot sauce man! But baby I'm dedicating Aretha's 'R-E-S-P-E-C-T' so that maybe you'll start givin' me some!

Marble everywhere. Valentino evening gown hangs over door. Sundry of diamond and ruby earrings on vanity. Makeup finished except for lipstick.

BERNADINE (VOICE OVER)
I do not feel like going to another one of these boring New Year's parties with a bunch of rich assholes.

Sees JOHN in the mirror. In tuxedo. Probably Armani.

JOHN
Would you be terribly disappointed if we didn't go to the party tonight.

BERNADINE
Crushed.

Now she really looks at his face in the mirror. It seems odd. As if he's got an agenda.

BERNADINE
What?

JOHN
Well, I guess there's no appropriate time to tell you this. But. I'm going to the party. Just not with you.

Bernadine doesn't quite get it.

JOHN
She doesn't want to be alone tonight. And I was thinking. Why should she be?

BERNADINE (VOICE OVER)
She.

Dawns on her. It's another woman. Slings earrings to end of vanity.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

BERNADINE

Is it that white bitch who does your goddamn books?! And you pick tonight to flaunt your whore in front of all your friends and business partners? What the hell are they supposed to think?

JOHN

The truth. That I'm leaving you. For her.

Bernadine goes from shock to fearful. Tries to raise her arms. It's too hard. John sees it. Knows he's in control of this situation.

JOHN

Don't worry. You can have the house. And you know I'll take care of my kids.

You motherfucker. Jumps to her feet. Hurls a roller at him like a bullet. Just misses his face. He doesn't flinch.

BERNADINE

I give you eleven years of my fucking life and you're leaving me for a white girl?

John remains ice-calm.

JOHN

Would it be better if she was black?

BERNADINE

It'd be better if you were black.

And now he smiles. Very small.

JOHN

Thanks. For making this easy for me...

Squares his shoulders.

JOHN

I'll be back next week for my things.

Walks out the door. A beat of silence. Bernadine stands there. Limp. We HEAR young kids making noise in b.g. The front door slams shut. She looks at herself in mirror...

BERNADINE (VOICE OVER)

Just like that.

9 INT. ROBIN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

9

Robin removing tons of makeup. Without it, she's even more beautiful. In Victoria Secret bra and panties.

MALE CALLER (O.S.)

Yeah. Uh. Like. Uh. I wanna like
dedicate a song to the freak of the week,
LaTwanna... girl...

RADIO ANNOUNCER (VOICE OVER)

Give us the song, man...

MALE CALLER (O.S.)

Uhhh. Uhhh. 'Bump N Grind' by R. Kelly.
You go girl!

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

I don't even believe I'm spending New
Year's by myself. This is definitely a
first.

Pushing pounds of hair behind ears.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

I finally just gave up on Russell. A
lying sneaky, whorish Pisces. Once I
realized he was never going to marry me.

10 INT. ROBIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

10

Walks to bedroom. Very frilly. Putting on sweats.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

He said it was scary.

(beat)

Russell, it's not prison. We've been
living together a whole year. What's the
difference?

Now socks. Sneakers. Then warm-up stretches.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

(imitating Russell)

There's a BIG difference, baby.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

Don't I make you happy?

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

(imitating Russell)

Very much so.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

Don't I satisfy you?

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)
(imitating Russell)
Definitely.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)
Well. When do you think you'll be ready?

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)
(imitating Russell)
I can't say. But don't worry, baby.
When I'm ready to make that move. You'll
be the first to know.

Loose enough. Sits down on cheap rowing machine. Rows slowly.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)
I did everything in my power to keep him.
I kept myself up. My feet were never
crusty. My polish never chipped. He
hardly ever saw me without makeup. And.
I spent a fortune on this weave.

Stops rowing. Goes over to stereo. Turns on radio. New Year's Eve music. Too mushy. Presses CD. Patti La Belle.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)
When he wrecked his Harley and didn't
have any insurance, didn't I get him a
backdated policy? And at a cheaper rate
since I'm a senior underwriter at my
company?

Back to machine. Rowing faster.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)
And when he filed for Chapter 11, didn't
I borrow three thousand dollars from my
parents to get his ass out of debt?

Sweating hard. On automatic.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)
And didn't I give him as much pussy as he
wanted, even when I was dead tired?

Why am I still doing this? Gets up.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)
What more could a man ask for?

11 INT. ROBIN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT 11

Walks into kitchen. Apartment is boring. Bland. She tries. Opens frig. Stares into it. Not much to choose from. Grabs OJ. Pours some.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

And shoot. How long can you hold your breath?

Now. Salsa. Chips.

12 INT. ROBIN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 12

Saunters over to living room. Sinks on sofa. Remotes on TV. Still HEAR Patti from bedroom.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

He was so fine that every black woman in America in her right mind probably wanted him. But I knew he was mine...

Speed-switches channels. Picks up Victoria Secret catalog. Folding back page corners of items she wants. Leans back. Puts her feet up on table. Perfect elixir for tonight.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

...until. I found that half-slip in his gym bag.

13 INT. GLORIA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT 13

Gloria cleaning out refrigerator.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (VOICE OVER)

And now for all you folks who don't know where to go tonight, here's some Luther for you! 'A House Is Not a Home.' Reach out and touch someone...

In terrycloth robe. Rubber gloves. Trash full of empties. She's not going anywhere. We HEAR loud RAP MUSIC from another room. Boyish voice rapping along.

GLORIA (VOICE OVER)

If he knew his schoolwork like he knows those words...

Removes gloves. Picks up tongs. Turns over chicken wings. They're sizzling in hot oil...

TARIK, 17, dressed to kill, tall, enters doorway. Watches mom. Mournfully...

GLORIA

Did you get my videos like I asked?

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

Tarik lifts them up. They're right there. Undaunted...

GLORIA

Did you take my pork rinds...?

Tarik pulls them from a cupboard, hands the bag to her with one hand.

TARIK

And don't forget your hot sauce.

Gloria glares at him. He's still not off the hook. Now she gets out her frozen fries. Cole slaw. Three slices of white bread.

TARIK

I wish you were going out tonight, Ma.

GLORIA

I'm just fine. Thank you...

She piles up chicken on a platter.

GLORIA

Now you're coming home at a decent hour tonight.

TARIK

It's New Year's Eve, Ma. Things don't start jumping off until midnight.

GLORIA

With those grades you brought home. You ought to be praising God you're going out at all. I suggest you get busy or you'll be using Morse code to talk to your little girlfriends.

TARIK

I'm doing the best I can. So you might as well just ground me right now.

They just look at each other. She walks over to him. Straightens out his collar. It doesn't need it. It's an excuse to touch him.

GLORIA

You know your father'll be here on Tuesday.

TARIK

Big deal. And he's not my father. He's my daddy. BIG damn difference.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED: (2)

13

GLORIA
You better watch your mouth.

Looks at her. Picks up a chicken wing. Walks away.

TARIK
I see the bastard every two years and I'm supposed to get excited? You get excited.

GLORIA
What's that supposed to mean?

TARIK
Well. Where'd he sleep the last time he was here?

This stings. How well she remembers.

GLORIA
That's none of your business.

He sees she's hurt.

TARIK
I'm sorry, Ma.

He goes to her, gives her a hug. We SEE now how much she loves him.

GLORIA
Who you going to this party with anyway?

TARIK
Jennifer.

Who? Gloria PLOPS spatula of fries on top of wings.

GLORIA
That itty-bitty white girl who lives down the street?

TARIK
Yeah. What's wrong with her?

Gloria shaking her head. More fries.

GLORIA (VOICE OVER)
She's okay. For a slut.

GLORIA
Nothing. Grab my Pepsi, would you?

He does. Which reminds him.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED: (3)

13

TARIK

Ma. Did you take your pills today?

Gloria gets out a pill from her pocket. Chases it with a sip from the Pepsi. Takes her full plate and walks right past him.

14 INT. GLORIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

14

Now we can see she's heading to her big chair with the afghan. It's party time.

15 INT. CIRCLE K STORE - NIGHT

15

Bernadine buying cigarettes. Looks like shit. Still in her robe. Rollers. Makeup. One ruby earring. She's totally spaced. Stuffing bills into wallet like there's no other option...

...from an aisle, JOSEPH watches her walk out the door. Does not even believe what he just saw. Tongue-tied.

16 EXT. CIRCLE K STORE - NIGHT

16

Bernadine tiptoes to BMW beneath a blue-black sky. Fumbles to get the key in the door. A streak of lightning bolts across the sky. She doesn't notice it at all. Rips cellophane from cigs. Lights it. Inhales like a non-smoker. Coughs. Tries it again. This time the smoke soothes...

17 INT./EXT. BERNADINE'S BMW - CIRCLE K STORE - NIGHT (LATER) 17

...her HANDS clutch the steering wheel as if she's already driving. Ashes have grown long. Cigarettes didn't work. Tears. Chewing away at her bottom lip. Looking desperately for answers...

...there are none. Then a sudden flicker of realization.

BERNADINE (VOICE OVER)

And that's when I realized my kids were at home sleeping in their beds. Alone.

...and she tries to get the key into ignition, but can't. Finally does. Gears GRIND.

18 INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - NIGHT

18

Savannah standing near the entrance. Trying hard not to look like she's alone. As if she's waiting or looking for someone. Scopes the room for an empty seat. MUSIC is pulsating. Pops two tic-tacs...

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

...finally, sees a spot at a table of three obvious couples. Music stops. Dance floor suddenly empty. She crosses it. Feels eyes on her body...

SAVANNAH

Is someone sitting here?

MEN

No. Please. Join us...

...but the women's faces say: Just who is this bitch? Savannah smiles and sits anyway.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

Hell yeah! I'm single and desperate and have no morals and as soon as one of you turn your back I'm gonna flirt my butt off and take your man!

Women whispering. Cackling. What am I doing here? I don't need this silly shit, and...

19 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

19

Savannah entering the bathroom where there's a long line. A striking woman taps her shoulder...

DENISE

That's a bad dress, girl. And you're wearing the hell out of it.

SAVANNAH

Why. Thanks. Happy New Year.

20 INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

20

Back inside it now. Where is he? A ballad comes on. A man gestures: Wanna dance? Shakes her head no. But thanks.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

I don't like dancing slow with strangers.

LIONEL (VOICE OVER)

Savannah?

She turns. Sees this black Marlboro man.

SAVANNAH

Lionel?

Starts to shake her hand but what the hell. A boyish grin emerges. Gives her a sweet hug.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

He let me go carefully. As if I might
fall.

We HEAR Michael Jackson wail: "Can't Stop 'Til I get Enough!"

LIONEL

Would you like to dance?

SHORT SERIES OF CUTS...Savannah and LIONEL dancing to
different songs. Talking. Laughing. Getting a sense of
each other. Charmed.

Now. Something soft. Slow. Lights dim.

LIONEL

You sure look beautiful tonight...

Blushing. This means a lot. Soft, vulnerable.

SAVANNAH

Thank you.

LIONEL

I'm certainly glad we finally meet. And
you made it here safely. In one piece.

Puts his arms around her.

SAVANNAH

Well, our machines were almost ready to
move in with each other.

He looks at her like he already knows he likes her. Pulls
her closer. Savannah sinks into him. She could stay right
here. Forever.

LIONEL

You feel so good.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

Thank you, Jesus.

She's inhaling him now.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

And then I did it. I closed my eyes...

She's finally in heaven. A softness we haven't seen covers
her face.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

And I exhaled.

Lights now look like stars.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: (2)

20

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)
And pretended this man was mine. That he
was everything I'd ever dreamed of...

Spinning slow.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)
That he was the one I'd been waiting for
all my life.

DENISE (O.S.)
Lionel. You haven't danced with me all
night.

It's the woman from the bathroom! Tugs firmly on Lionel's
arm. She seems to have a claim here. He's hesitant, but he
hasn't much choice.

LIONEL
Savannah. This is my friend, Denise.

SAVANNAH
We've sort of met. Already.

He's surprised. DENISE is already sliding into his arms.
His eyes are genuinely apologetic.

She watches them dancing slow with envy until we SEE her
hurt. This is too familiar. Turns on her heels...

As she heads for the door, a number of MEN hey-baby and yo-
Mama and yes-yes-yes and can-I-take-you-home-with-me...to
her. She is not at all flattered. In fact, Savannah's close
to tears.

SAVANNAH
(voice over; bravely)
If I hurry. I can still catch Dick
Clark.

21 INT. OASIS HAIR SALON - DAY

21

Gloria is curling a little girl's hair. The place is crowded
with women reading JET, EBONY, ESSENCE, STAR. A few are
asleep, others watching TV, while Luther Vandross sings in
the b.g. A fat woman with dye smeared in her hair is now
clearly impatient.

GLORIA
Sister Monroe. You asked for Flame Red
and Las Vegas ain't going nowhere. Now
give me two more minutes.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

21

Robin's at an empty station, painting her own nails. Watching Gloria. Trying not to laugh. Gloria's eyes dare her to.

GLORIA

I'm charging you twenty five cents a finger. Why don't you get your cheap behind back to your hot shit -- sorry sister Monroe -- insurance company? Lunch hour is over.

ROBIN

Because I've got it like that. I don't punch in. Or out. So shut up.

Fanning her hands in circles. Cracking up.

Next to Gloria we SEE Joseph -- the man we saw at the Circle K -- rolling someone's hair on rods. One stylist is french braiding, another finishing up a weave. Fake nails being sanded.

JOSEPH

So I guess you guys heard. John left Bernie. And for a white girl!

Gloria stops curling. Robin's hands drop to her side. What did he just say? The two women respond in unison...

GLORIA

I know you're lying.

ROBIN

You've gotta be bullshitting!

JOSEPH

If I'm lying I'm flying. I saw her just the other night at a Circle K. She was a mess. In rollers. Wearing her bathrobe. I had to drive girlfriend home...

Gloria goes from stunned to clearly worried. Little girl squirms.

GLORIA

You better be still if you don't want bumps in your scalp.

(beat)

Left her, huh?

ROBIN

For a WHITE girl? Are you serious?

JOSEPH

As a heart attack.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED: (2)

21

Robin's pacing and rubbing off smudged red polish with a cottonball. Stops.

ROBIN

I told you he was an asshole.

GLORIA

No. I told you he was an asshole.

Gloria's fighting the urge to call. Sister Monroe is now sitting by the sink, tapping her fat feet. While Gloria dials, she glares at the woman. Look, this is my friend. Chill. Tells Bernie's answering machine...

GLORIA

Bernie. What's going on over there? Are you all right? Don't be hiding from me. I'm here for you, baby. Call m...

Robin spills polish remover on her suit grabbing phone from Gloria.

ROBIN

(shouting)

THAT SON-OF-A-BITCH MUST BE ON DRUGS AS MUCH AS YOU'VE DONE FOR HIS SORRY ASS AND LEAVING YOU WITH TWO KI...

Gloria snatches the phone back.

22 INT. BERNADINE'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

22

Waking up. She's still a wreck; hair wild, wrinkled clothes, dark circles. Room looks like a hurricane hit it...

23 INT. BERNADINE'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

23

...wanders through the house. Checks on kids who are still sleeping. These are my angels...

24 INT. BERNADINE'S KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

24

...pours water into coffee maker, notices two messages on the machine. Dare I? Presses it anyway. As Gloria's message begins, Bernie drowns her out by GRINDING coffee beans. STOPS grinding long enough to hear...

ROBIN (O.S.)

(on phone)

...SON-OF-A-BITCH MUST BE ON DRUGS...

Bernie stares at the phone. Looks over toward the huge GREAT room. Scans it. Miro paintings. Antiques. Architectural Digest. And she's getting pissed off.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: 24

BERNADINE
Nothing uglier than a perfect room.

25 OMITTED 25

26 EXT. BERNADINE'S HOUSE - DAY 26

As the kids rush out we SEE a van full of white children.

BERNADINE
Hey!

They run back to kiss her. Every house on this block is beautiful. She waves good-bye. Now she can get busy...

27 INT. BERNADINE'S BEDROOM - DAY 27

...opens John's closet. Looks like a Nieman Marcus boutique. Everything is arranged by color. Murmurs to herself...

BERNADINE
This motherfucker was psychotic.

John's shoes in perfect rows. Suits are grouped by designer: Adolpho on. Ties hang in front of them. Shirts by hues: white to black. Sports coats, etc.

BERNADINE
I bet there're serial killers less anal.

Now she's swiping suits, shirts, off the hangers.

BERNADINE
A white woman is probably the only one who'd tolerate his black ass.

28 INT. BERNADINE'S HOUSE - DAY 28

Storms through the house...

29 INT./EXT. BERNADINE'S GARAGE - DAY 29

...garage, past John's 1949 Ford. Throws bundle into back seat of BMW, then drives it out to curb. But she's not finished!

30 INT. BERNADINE'S BATHROOM - DAY 30

BERNADINE (VOICE OVER)
Hell. I was his white girl for eleven years.

...we're in the bathroom. Hear bottles CRASH inside a trash can.

31 INT. BERNADINE'S HOUSE - DAY 31

Almost gallops through the house. Drags a red wagon back inside.

32 INT. BERNADINE'S BEDROOM - DAY 32

BERNADINE

Couldn't have started that damn company without me. I worked my ass off.

Punctuate the following by her throwing his shoes out into the room, into the wagon -- missing a few -- and getting increasingly angrier with each toss.

BERNADINE (VOICE OVER)

I mean, I've got a business degree and there I was his secretary, his office manager, his computer! His fucking bookkeeper! His partner! His wife. And his lover...

Shakes her head.

BERNADINE

(imitates John)

No you can't start your catering business. Wait a few years.

A mountain of shoes grow. Slings boots. They don't make the wagon.

BERNADINE (VOICE OVER)

When I said I wanted to cut my hair you said you'd leave me if I did. So I let it grow.

Her face shows disgust.

BERNADINE (VOICE OVER)

I had to wear No. 30 sunblock because you didn't want me getting too 'dark'.

Flings sneakers.

BERNADINE (VOICE OVER)

And the worst. The fucking worst. Was making my kids go to school where there were only two other black children.

Golf shoes.

BERNADINE (VOICE OVER)

So they wouldn't be 'improperly influenced.'

Storms out into the bedroom. Looks at the bed.

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

BERNADINE

732. That was the last fucking straw.

33 INT./EXT. BERNADINE'S GARAGE - DAY

33

...Back out to the car. Staring at all of his things. The car is definitely full. Squeezes the shoes inside. Squirts kerosene over entire pile.

BERNADINE (VOICE OVER)

732. The number of times we made love. I remember the first time the bastard told me he was counting. It was right after 51. Fuck me for not leaving right then.

Strikes a match. Tosses it inside the car. Another match to light her cigarette. As the car GOES UP in flames, she's not interested in watching. Saunters back through garage. Presses Genie.

34 INT./EXT. BERNADINE'S - LATER

34

Bernie sitting on sofa, watching TV with no sound. Chain smoking. Doorbell. Who could that be? It's the fire department. What could they want?

FIREMAN

Ma'am. Were you aware that your car was on fire?

Bernadine merely gives him a blank look.

FIREMAN

Did you start this fire, Ma'am?

What do you think?

FIREMAN

It's against the law to burn anything except trash in your own yard, Ma'am.

BERNADINE

It is trash.

Now he's annoyed.

FIREMAN

Why would you want to burn up a brand-new BMW?

That's none of your business.

FIREMAN

You know your insurance won't cover this.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

BERNADINE
I'm aware of that.

These rich black ones are just as fucked-up as whites.
Sickos.

FIREMAN
Well. This is a pretty nice area. And
luckily a neighbor cared enough...

Are we almost finished here? He turns to leave. On second
thought...

FIREMAN
The next time you want t...

BERNADINE
It won't happen again.

Kicks the door shut. Now where was I?

34A INT. BERNADINE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FORMERLY SCENE 48) 34A

Bernie and the kids are watching home movies of happier times on the giant screen TV. They're eating popcorn, she's scanning the label on a prescription bottle. What's in this shit? Looks over at the clock. Then at her watch to make sure. She hears John's voice, looks up and he's standing behind her on screen, with his arms around her, showing her how to swing a golf club, but sneaks a peck on her neck. Bernie looks like she could cry any minute, when...

...the DOORBELL rings. Finally. Her face brightens. Whoever it is, she's excited about seeing them. When she opens the door, Savannah is standing there, suitcase on one side, bag of toys on the other. We didn't even know they knew each other, but they look like long-lost sisters.

SAVANNAH
I need a double Cuervo.

Bernie smiles. I'm just so damn glad you're here. And then they HUG each other so hard that their appreciation for each other causes them to rock back and forth.

BERNADINE
(whispering)
I'm okay.

Savannah nods. Of course you are. And smooths Bernie's hair, which has been cut. Walks slowly back into the house. The kids come running. Gives them equally huge hugs and hands each of them a toy. Without looking at Bernie...

(CONTINUED)

34A CONTINUED:

34A

SAVANNAH
I like your house.

BERNADINE
You got five dollars. You can have it.

Bernie is now standing directly in front of the screen as she and John slow dance at a party in this same living room.

BERNADINE
I always thought if I gave him what he needed he'd give me what I needed.

Bernie's shaking her head.

BERNADINE
It's amazing what can happen when you give a man power over your life.
(beat)
But I really can't pretend that this is all John's fault.

Savannah's glad to hear her say this.

BERNADINE
So tell me about this new job, girl?

SAVANNAH
I took a pay cut so I could find out if I have what it takes to produce. You know, a few of us out here are still on this dream trip.

And they almost smile, but don't. Bernie goes to get them drinks. Savannah merely looks around, warming up to the place and when she sees the remote, picks it up, looks at John on the screen, is tempted to turn him off. Then, doesn't.

34B EXT. BACKYARD BY THE POOL (FORMERLY SCENE 49)

34B

They're both reclining on chaise lounges. Night sounds of the desert. They don't touch their drinks. Both stare into the water, as...

SAVANNAH
Are you scared?

BERNADINE
Yes.

They pick up their drinks simultaneously. Long sips.

SAVANNAH
Me too.

35 INT. ROBIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

35

Robin's pulling several lace nighties from a Victoria Secret box. Tries one on. No. Grabs another. No. Opens another box. A Teddy. This is HOT. Now rushing. Searching for the right CD. Reba McEntire? Scrutinizes the room. Flossing fast. What'd I forget?

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

Michael and I work for the same insurance company. He's just been promoted to marketing rep.

Clicks on a fake Tiffany. The room turns orange. Spots Thrifty's bag on the table. Yanks a humongous birthday card out, drops envelope in basket. Where's a pen? Runs to chest of drawers, sits back down and writes...

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

To the woman of any man's dreams. You go girl. Love. Billy. No, not Billy.
(notices brand name on pen)
Love. Parker!

Prominently places the card next to the bouquet of flowers. Whoops! Pulls off the price tag wrapped around a flower! There. She is too pleased with herself. Now where was I? Tries to reclaim that sexy demeanor, smirk, perch. Waits. Listens. Damn. Reba's not right! Up we go again.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

At dinner, he told me he drag races. Scuba dives, deep-sea fishes. He keeps his own boat in the White Mountains.

Puts on Freddie Jackson. Now positions herself on the hope chest. Moves dolls over. I hope I look like dessert.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

I told him I grew up an army brat. That I went to ASU. Majored in anthropology.

Hear toilet flush. Robin quickly leans backwards, striking a Victoria Secret pose. Bathroom door opens. Out comes MICHAEL in boxer shorts. A chubby nerd, but not ugly.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

Michael is not pretty. But he is available.

He stares at her. Sighs...

MICHAEL

A Kodak moment.

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED:

35

...and crosses the room purposefully. Raises one eyebrow. You can't tell him he's not a sexy kind of guy. He leans forward slowly, and then...DIVES into her face. This is a kiss. That gets sloppier as time passes. And it does.

Robin is suffocating. But he can't be stopped. Now he's DRACULA! To divert him, she sticks her tongue in his ear. Yuk! Something is growing inside. Well. Shit. Now she's squished inside a BEAR hug.

MICHAEL

You feel even better than I thought you would.

She pulls back, staring at his chest.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

Michael had to be about a 38D. My brain was saying put your hands anywhere else but on my body. Then go home. And don't come back. You human submarine sandwich!

And she's being lifted up in his arms.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

But you can't say that kind of thing without hurting someone's feelings.

Not as easy as he thought it would be. He drops her on the bed. As Michael slides under the sheets, she's waiting for him to do something. He is. Fumbling under the covers.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

Damn. I didn't even get a chance to see what he had to offer.

She stares. Waits.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

Well, somebody's gotta undress me.

She lifts off her nightgown. His eyes grow big. She clutches her breasts to cover herself. A worried look.

MICHAEL

I knew you were going to be beautiful. All over.

She melts a little. He's still trying to get his condom on.

ROBIN

You need some help?

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED: (2)

35

MICHAEL

No no no.

(beat)

There.

He rolls over on top of her. She can't breathe. Suction kissing now. Michael's pumping fast. Robin wonders: Why? Looks up to see his hands on headboard. You mean it's in already? Her head is bobbing up and down like a rag doll. Rows of her black dolls tumble over the hope chest onto the floor. Robin stares intently at the ceiling.

MICHAEL

(loudly)

God this is good!

What is he talking about? And suddenly he's finished. Drops his weight on her. Exasperated breathing.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

Does he think he just did something here?

Shit. I could've had a V-8.

He looks triumphant. Damn. I'm good.

MICHAEL

I knew you were somebody special. How do you feel?

Lying like a mummy. She is pissed.

ROBIN

About what?

His hands folded behind his head. Like he's Clark Gable.

MICHAEL

Me. This. Everything.

She has to say something. But what? Staring at his triple-chin. His breasts.

MICHAEL

Tell me what you want. What you need. Because whatever it is. I'm going to see that you have it.

He seems to actually mean this.

MICHAEL

What's your fantasy?

Slowly gets up on her knees. Runs her hand through her hair.

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED: (3)

35

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)
I decided to pretend he was Russell. But
I forgot. I hate Russell. Denzel
Washington would do.

Gives Michael a wicked grin. Begins to rub her hands up and
down her own thighs. Now she's having some fun.

MICHAEL
I mean what do you want from a man?

ROBIN
Are you sure you want to hear this?

MICHAEL
It's the reason I asked.

Here goes.

ROBIN
Everything.

MICHAEL
Could you be more specific?

No need to think about this.

ROBIN
I want to live in a house.
(beat)
In Scottsdale.

MICHAEL
I own a house. In Scottsdale. What
else?

She moves over onto his lap. Her hips begin and continue to
rock.

ROBIN
I wanna get married and have a baby.
(beat)
Two or three.

MICHAEL
And?

ROBIN
Stay home until they're in third grade.
Do some charity work. Sew. Read. Learn
how to cook.

MICHAEL
What else?

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED: (4)

35

ROBIN

Eat out, two, three times a week. Go
away for long weekends...

MICHAEL

You don't want much. I'd give you that,
and more.

Looking at him with new eyes.

ROBIN

What about you. What do you want,
Michael?

In all earnestness.

MICHAEL

I think I've found it.

ROBIN

You don't even know me.

And from his heart...

MICHAEL

It's more about knowing me.

(beat)

I can give you everything you want.
Everything you need. If you'll let me.

Her breathing has definitely increased.

ROBIN

You wanna make me happy right now?

She leans toward him, slowly, purposefully...

ROBIN

Really. Really. Happy?

She cups her breasts, moves into him, then presses them
against his lips.

ROBIN

You can start by kissing them. Slowly.
Gently.

He tries. He tries his best.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

He did it right. And I felt like silk.
And when I looked at him Michael wasn't
fat anymore. I felt young. And sexy.
And beautiful.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED: (5)

35

ROBIN (Cont'd)
 (closes her eyes)
 And when I squeezed my pelvis real tight.
 And my body exploded from the inside out.
 Michael felt just like the Real Thing.
 And everything was perfect. For once.

ANGLE ON FLOWERS

DISSOLVE TO:

36 INT./EXT. GLORIA'S KITCHEN - CLOSE ON FLOWERS - NIGHT 36

on kitchen table. Gloria is stirring something in a big pot. She's duded up in what could be a church outfit. Plus an apron. Several pots are on the stove. Fancy salad nearby. Other dishes.

GLORIA (VOICE OVER)
 When David was here last time he did me
 a favor by spending the night.

Hears a CAR door. Sneaks a peak through kitchen window. He's still gorgeous. Dressed to kill. DOORBELL.

GLORIA (VOICE OVER)
 Lord, let him feel merciful again
 tonight.

She counts to three before answering. Deep breath.

DAVID
 Well. You're looking healthy.

GLORIA (VOICE OVER)
 He means fat.

GLORIA
 Thanks. Have a seat.

He does so. But reluctantly. Like he's ready to leave already. She sits across from him.

DAVID
 So. Where's Tarik?

GLORIA
 He's not here right now.

DAVID
 I don't know why I continue doing this.
 He's almost an adult.

His jawbone is jumping. Gloria knows she must act fast.

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED:

36

GLORIA
Would you like some wine?

DAVID
No thanks. Exactly when are you
expecting him.

GLORIA
Tomorrow.

He rises. He's been set up. He stalks to the door...

GLORIA
Wait. You're welcome to stay here.

DAVID
Here?

GLORIA
Well. I just thought. Maybe. Because.
Last ti...

DAVID
I might as well be honest with you.

Honest.

GLORIA
About what?

DAVID
About me.
(beat)
Do you remember how I didn't respond to
you last time?

GLORIA
Of course I remember.

His look is strong, but strange. What is this?

GLORIA
I thought it was because I had put on so
much wei...

DAVID
...I've been bisexual for years.

Puts her hand over her heart. Is he making this up?

GLORIA
You've been what?

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED: (2)

36

DAVID

You heard me right. But I'm not anymore.
I'm gay.

Hand on the doorknob. Gloria is frozen.

GLORIA

Look you don't have to go to this extreme
just so you won't have to...

She's too embarrassed to complete that thought.

DAVID

I'm staying at the Biltmore. If I don't
hear from him by noon. I'm checking out.

(beat)

And I mean just that.

And he's gone.

37 EXT. BERNADINE'S DRIVEWAY - EARLY MORNING

37

Bernadine sits at a card table. Driveway is full of all
John's good stuff: Golf clubs. Tennis rackets. Tools.
Coats. Skis. That 1949 Ford. A GIANT sign says: Everything
\$1.00!

John Jr. pushing a roto-till.

BERNADINE

Put that over there.

JOHN JR.

Ma. Are we just selling daddy's stuff?

BERNADINE

Yes.

ONIKA

Why come?

BERNADINE

How come. Because he asked me to.

JOHN JR.

He did?

BERNADINE

Yes. All it's doing is collecting dust.
Now go get the wine.

They fight over who's going to pull the red wagon that is
full of bottles of vintage wine. John wins, but several

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

37

bottles fall out and break. Both children are frightened. But when they look at their Mom...she is beaming, the happiest they've seen her.

38 EXT. BERNADINE'S DRIVEWAY - DAY (LATER)

38

...People arriving. Chose items in a frenzy. Bernadine has a thin smile on her face as things start to disappear.

JOHN JR.

Who gets to keep the money, Ma?

BERNADINE

We do.

ONIKA

Is Daddy on another trip?

BERNADINE

Yeah. He's on a trip all right.

A guy walks up to her and pulls out a dollar. She can't be serious about this car. She hands him the pink slip. Just waves, as he drives that sucker away.

She looks around now, the driveway is nearly empty. Attack of the locusts.

BERNADINE (VOICE OVER)

You wanna start a new life motherfucker?
Try it starting from scratch.

39 INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

39

Savannah sits on the edge of the bed in a pink teddy. Smoking. Waiting. Turns on radio. "MY FUNNY VALENTINE" playing, as we HEAR it during her voice over. The SHOWER stops.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

I didn't think I'd ever see him again.
But he called to apologize.

Lionel comes out of the shower with a towel wrapped around him. She's trying not to stare, but he is beautiful. And. Has all the necessary equipment. He begins to brush his teeth. She is suddenly astonished.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

That's my toothbrush! Is he crazy?

She can't fucking believe this.

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED:

39

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

Turns out this guy has no real income.
Chain smokes reefer. Brags about being
a vegetarian, then inhales three hot
dogs, like it's the last time somebody's
gonna buy him a meal.

(beat)

I gave him a twenty for gas. Which came
to \$7.18. He didn't give me my change.

Lionel winks at her. She tries to smile.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

My fantasy was to get myself a little
piece. Get my feet wet in a new town.

(beat)

Well, not exactly my feet.

(beat)

Hell. It's been five months.

He brushes his hair. She lights another cigarette. What am
I doing here?

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

He has gotten on my last nerve. But. I
don't have to be in love with him to do
it. Hell. My body needs this.

"Valentine" more distinct now, grows to a crescendo as he
slides into bed, pulls her backwards and simply hops on top
of her. No kiss. No hug. No caresses. He simply begins.
She is stunned. Then offended. Suddenly, the race is on...

SAVANNAH

You can take your time, Lionel. We've
got all night.

LIONEL

I'm just excited. Been thinking about
what I'd do to you since New Year's.

Yeah I bet. Whoa! She's on a bucking BRONCO ride. Grabs
headboard. She sees that he doesn't see her. At all. This
is not fun.

LIONEL

Hold on. I'm on my way. Baby!

And we hear him growl.

LIONEL

GRRRRRRRR!

She just blinks.

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED: (2)

39

SAVANNAH

Grrrrr?

LIONEL

GRRRRRRRRRRRR!

She is underwhelmed.

SAVANNAH

Grrrrr, huh?

LIONEL

GRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR!!!

She stares dead at him.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

Now I'm a keeper. At the goddamn zoo.

40 INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

40

With fierce determination, Bernadine is charging through the high-tech office with a trench coat draped over her right arm, concealing her hand. When she comes to...

RECEPTIONIST

Bernie, I think he's in a board meeting right now. I'll r...

Keeps moving. When she reaches the conference room, through the glass we SEE KATHLEEN next to him. She's pretty. California streaky blonde. Before we know it, Bernadine's inside. John rising, throwing up his arms, Kathleen springing off desk, turning to John for guidance...

...as Bernadine SLAPS her HARD, right across her face.

BERNADINE

Now. Would you mind terribly if I have a few words with my husband. I won't be a minute.

Kathleen flees. John can't get around his desk fast enough, but when Bernadine WHIPS her trench coat-covered hand sharply towards him, he stops dead in his tracks, as if facing a weapon.

BERNADINE

Don't worry. I probably don't have a gun.

He's not sure if he believes her.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

40

BERNADINE

I've been to the bank. Thanks for thinking of your children. You're a dirt-bag in a suit, aren't you?

He leans back against his desk.

JOHN

You're not playing fair. So neither am I.

Lifting her concealed hand more toward his chest.

BERNADINE

Just what am I supposed to do for money?

He can't help but look scared.

JOHN

You've got a job. I gave you the house. Sell it.

BERNADINE

I hate you. You know that?

JOHN

I'm sorry to hear that Bernadine.

Oh, and by the way, motherfucker...

BERNADINE

Who do you think started this goddamn company?

He knows. Eyes are still on her right hand.

BERNADINE

Did you really think you could just take the fucking money and run?

JOHN

Business hasn't been good for years. But don't worry. You'll get something out of it.

Something? Her eyes cut through him.

BERNADINE

I'm not worried. You. On the other hand. Should be worried.

JOHN

Look. Let's not let this thing get any uglier than it already has.
(more)

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED: (2)

40

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm willing to give you \$300,000. Cash.
Today. And we can be done with this
whole thing.

BERNADINE

My ass is worth more than that! And
John. This is already as ugly as it can
get.

Still edgy...

JOHN

I'd take it if I were you. Or you're
gonna wake up really sorry you didn't.
And I'd hate to see that.

Glaring at each other.

JOHN

I'm coming for my kids on Saturday. And
I'm gonna bring a check for \$3,000 to
help with your bills.

Bernadine can't believe this shit.

BERNADINE

Three whole thousand? That must be half
her Clairol allowance. My kids aren't
for sale, fuck-face!

JOHN

If you make me go to court, I'll have an
order in twenty-four hours. Because
they're my kids too.

Bernadine knows he's right.

BERNADINE

If I find out they've been in the same
room with that whore, you'll regret it
the rest of your life.

JOHN

Are you threatening me?

She turns her back to him. Two steps to the door, WHIRLS,
FLAILING her concealed hand at him, and he FLINCHES badly.
She smiles real slow. Reveals that she's been holding a bag
of SKITTLES. Pops a few into her mouth. Throws the
remaining sixty or so at him. Out of the room, SLAMMING the
door so hard, the glass RATTLES.

A41 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A41

Robin's seated near the head of a long table with about eight other co-workers, mostly men. Robin looks different. More poised. Conservatively dressed. Light makeup. See a side of her we haven't seen before: speaks more intelligently. She's nearing the end of a presentation for a new business meeting.

ROBIN

This account comes up for renewal June 1. The worker's comp premium is about a million and a half. The loss experience for the last three years has been excellent.

COLLEAGUE

What does the engineering report show?

She shuffles papers, but doesn't look at them.

ROBIN

It indicates an active safety environ...

She stops, because a secretary is motioning to her that there's a phone call for her and it's important.

ROBIN

Would you excuse me for a second?

They nod. She walks to the end of the room and picks up the phone. As she listens, her face changes completely. All thoughts of her meeting are gone. She fights against her anxiety to keep her voice soothing...

ROBIN

Ma, just slow down. I can't understand you...

She listens. Listens.

CUT TO:

41 INT. ROBIN'S PARENTS' HOUSE - TUCSON - DAY

41

Her MOTHER is in the front yard, pruning roses. She looks grateful, but apprehensive as Robin gives her a big hug...

ROBIN

Where's Daddy?

Her mother points.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

MOTHER

He's in there. Making his lunch.

Robin grasps her mother's hand and leads her inside.

42 INT. ROBIN'S PARENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - TUCSON - DAY

42

This little house is very comfortable. Retirees live here. Knickknacks. Memorabilia from younger days. Drapes. 1970 furnishings. Robin remembers as she pushes door to kitchen and...

...her DADDY, still in his PJ's, has spread mayonnaise on at least ten slices of bread and still counting. Uses a plastic knife. This breaks her heart to watch.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

My mother's hidden all the real knives.
And everything silver. He hates silver.

He hears her:

ROBIN

Hi Daddy.

Is that who I think it is?

DADDY

What's doing pumpkin?

Places her hand gently on his back. Rubs in circles. Leans in to see exactly what he's doing. Doesn't say anything.

ROBIN

Just came to see how you and Ma are doing.

DADDY

I'm fine. Making my lunch here. Getting ready for work.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

He hasn't worked in ten years.

ROBIN

You must be pretty hungry today.

DADDY

Don't get smart with me. I'm minding my own business here.

Abruptly turns his back to her.

ROBIN

I'm sorry Daddy. I wasn't trying...

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

DADDY

Leave me alone would you...

...and shoos her away. She steps back towards the door, but can't leave. Not yet. He sprinkles some sugar on the bread. Oh, Daddy. If she watches him long enough, maybe he'll snap out of it. Maybe she'll get her old Daddy back.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

In the beginning. He forgot little things. Like where he put something. How to tie his shoe. Then bigger things: like his address. And phone number. That was two years ago. When he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

He slaps bread together. Makes piles. Tears. What has happened to my Daddy? The one I knew? Now he's dropping them into a grocery sack and walks straight out the side door with his lunch.

43 EXT. ROBIN'S PARENT'S HOUSE - TUCSON - DAY

43

Robin thinks he's going to sit in a lawn chair, but he's heading toward the front, where the street is. He's walking fast. He's on his way to work.

ROBIN

Ma! Daddy's leaving!

And Robin takes off after him. Cars zipping by. She's frightened when she sees him about to cross the street without stopping or looking. The HONKING and SCREECHING of brakes begin.

ROBIN

Daddy! Come back. Stop!

Robin grabs his arm but he shoves her away.

DADDY

Get away from me! I'm late!

Her mother walks briskly toward them. Gives her husband a big smile. She is calm.

MOTHER

Oh, there you are Fred. Your boss just called.

He did?

MOTHER

Yep. They're all waiting for you.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

And she takes his hand and leads him back toward the house. He doesn't resist. Robin trails after them. Helpless. A nervous wreck. Mother ushers Daddy through the door, turns back to Robin...

MOTHER

This is what I do all day.

44 INT./EXT. MACDONALD'S - DAY

44

Bernie and the kids are the sixth car in the drive-up window line. John Jr. loudly teasing Onika's inability to find WALDO. Something's on Bernie's mind. Is this the right time? Line hasn't moved. Now it's turned into a screaming match, so fuck it...

BERNADINE

I have to tell you guys something.
Important.

(beat)

Do you have any idea what a divorce is?

ONIKA

Jenna's mom and dad got one.

JOHN JR.

It's when you don't live together anymore.

BERNADINE

That's right. And do you understand why?

JOHN JR.

'Cause you hate each other. Zachary told me his mom hated his dad and his dad hated his mom and that's why they got a divorce.

BERNADINE

That's not true. What it really means is that sometimes moms and dads don't love each other like they...

JOHN JR.

Are you and Daddy getting a divorce?

Bernadine reaches for a cigarette. Decides against it. Bites her bottom lip for support.

BERNADINE

Yes.

ONIKA

Yippee! I can't wait to tell Jenna.

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED:

44

JOHN JR.

You mean Daddy's not going to live with us anymore?

BERNADINE

No. Your daddy's not going to live with us anymore. But you'll spend weekends and some holidays with him. He still loves you both very much.

JOHN JR.

Are you getting a new husband?

BERNADINE

No.

Now they're two cars away from ordering.

JOHN JR.

Is this all you wanted to tell us?

Bernadine gives him a look through the rearview mirror. He turns his attention back to his WHERE'S WALDO book.

JOHN JR.

Then I'll have chicken McNuggets, large fries and a coke. There's Waldo! Is Daddy getting a new wife?

This is a sour note for Bernie.

BERNADINE

It's too soon for either of us to get married again. But he may have a friend.

ONIKA

You mean a girlfriend.

JOHN JR.

Daddy can't have a girlfriend. Dummy.

ONIKA

(proudly)

Yes he can. And I know who it is!

They're at the order window. Bernie and John Jr. simply stare at her.

JOHN JR.

Who is it then? Miss Know-It-All?

Onika's milking this moment for all it's worth. She's got the goods.

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED: (2)

44

ONIKA

I want a Happy Meal with a cheeseburger
and a strawberry shake. Kathleen. I saw
Daddy kiss her on the lips. So there!

Bernadine fires up a cigarette. That son-of-a-bitch. Her
knuckles grow white from gripping the steering wheel. Can't
this line move any faster? It takes all the strength she has
to hand the kids their drinks. She throws their bags into
the back seat, puts the pedal to the metal and drives without
stopping. Right over the curb.

45 INT. ROBIN'S PARENTS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

45

Robin's lying on the sofa bed. Mom and Dad are asleep. A
few coyotes howl. Then silence. The room is moonlit. Her
eyes scan the ceiling in a daze.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

My daddy used to be a strong man. The
one man I respected. The one man I
expected all the others to live up to.

(turns over on her
side.)

I was his sweet baby girl.

Too painful to think about. Listens to the silence. Sleep
finally finds her...

...when she feels a hard thump on her head. She rolls over
and sees her Daddy, standing tall and strong. He's smiling
at his daughter.

DADDY

You alright?

ROBIN

Yes I'm fine, daddy.

DADDY

How you and Billy doing?

Billy?

ROBIN

That was ten years ago, Daddy.

DADDY

You're treating him right, I hope.

Robin nodding her head yes.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

DADDY

Good girl. Take care of him, like your
Mama took care of me. Then you'll be the
best wife you can be.

She smiles, pretty much in agreement.

DADDY

You want to know something, sugar?

She sits up now. Almost blushing.

ROBIN

Yes I do Daddy.

He knows exactly who she is. Exactly what he's saying.

DADDY

I love you. And don't you ever forget
that.

This is the father she knows. Misses. She's got him back
for right now. And for that, she's grateful, even when he
turns and heads back toward his bedroom.

46 INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

46

Bernie smoking, despite NO SMOKING sign. Clearly disturbed.
Her LAWYER, a Joyce Carol Oates-type, is tapping eraser on
pencil.

LAWYER

...so, it appears that everything he's
purchased over the last ten years is in
his name only. Including the business.

Bernadine is stunned. Two quick drags on the cigarette.

BERNADINE

That's impossible.

LAWYER

Your husband's a smooth operator. But
how he could do this without your
knowledge is difficult for me to grasp.

BERNADINE

(defensive)

He handled all of our affairs.

Obviously.

(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED:

46

BERNADINE

Look. I'm not trying to get rich. I
just want to be able to pay my mortgage,
take care of my kids, their education...
(beat)

I just wanna be okay...all right?

The Lawyer sighs. Gives Bernie a thoughtful but doubtful
look.

LAWYER

All I can promise is that I'll do the
best I can.

46A INT. CASINO - INDIAN RESERVATION - NIGHT

46A

Bernie's slowly but aimlessly meandering through the maze of
slot machines, not minding the clamor and clanking and the
whir of colors and people that appear to be enveloping her.
In fact, she looks just the opposite. Full of repose. She
eases her way through the crowd in almost cat-like fashion,
stops at a blackjack table, then over to a crap table. She
watches how the dice fall. Craps. The croupier pushes the
dice in front of her. She's surprised. Her eyes say she
doesn't play. Everyone around the table loves a novice, so
she throws them ferociously. Seven is her number.

47 INT./EXT. OASIS HAIR SALON - NIGHT

47

Gloria enters darkened salon, flipping on lights when she
hears a BANGING on the front door. One light reveals it's
Bernie. Gloria throws her hands up, clearly pissed, but
rushes to let her in.

GLORIA

This is the stupidest move you've made
yet. Just because you're up...

Bernie almost pushes her out of the way getting past her.

BERNADINE

Look I didn't come here for a lecture.
Just do it.

And she gets in Gloria's chair. Gloria is too annoyed with
her. Walks over and starts getting her "tools" ready slowly.
Looks down at Bernie's long hair. This is a damn shame.

GLORIA

I've been doing your hair for eleven
years and one ignorant move by your
husband and on impulse, you wanna chop
off all your hair?

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

47

BERNADINE
Just cut the shit off, Gloria.

Gloria rakes her fingers through Bernie's mane while shaking her head. Then stops.

GLORIA
I'm not doing this.

Bernie grips chair arms, turns to glare up at her.

BERNADINE
Gloria, just fucking cut it off!

GLORIA
Tomorrow you're gonna feel stupid and be mad at me for doing it.

BERNADINE
IF YOU DON'T CUT THE SHIT OFF RIGHT NOW
I'LL DO IT MYSELF! WHERE'RE THE FUCKING
SCISSORS?

Gloria stands there. Frozen. As...

...Bernie grabs the scissors and cuts off a huge hunk of her hair, then curtly hands the sheers to Gloria, who snatches them and slowly begins to cut.

48
thru OMITTED
49

48
thru
49

50 INT. PENDLETON'S RESORT - EVENING

50

The place is full. Bernie, Savannah and Robin sit at a table, sipping their drinks, assessing the men in the crowd. Someone should ask one of us to dance any minute. It's apparent that many unescorted women at other tables have the same look.

GLORIA
I don't know why they call this mess
happy hour?

Sit your fat-ass down. Bernie starts popping her fingers to the music. Spots someone she knows at the bar...

SAVANNAH
(looking around)
Well, it's still pretty early.

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED:

50

ROBIN

That's not it sweetheart. This is your first time hanging out here. I hate to be the one to break it to you, but this is as good as it gets.

And Bernie jumps up...

BERNADINE

I feel like dancing.

She is one sexy-mama tonight in her tight black dress, as she sashays across the room right up to a gorgeous hunk standing at the bar. Is this the same Bernie we know? As they watch her suggestive moves on the dance floor with him...

GLORIA

His name is Herbert Webster. He used to play pro-football. But now he's a sports agent. And...

ROBIN

...fine as hell. If she don't want him. I'll slam dunk him tonight.

Robin's popping her fingers. She's three Pina Coladas tipsy.

GLORIA

He's also very much married.

Robin's dancing in her seat. Her eyes say: So what?

SAVANNAH

All she's doing is dancing. Damn.

GLORIA

Are you blind? She's flirting with him!

You broads are stupid. This whole night is dumb. Looks at her watch.

GLORIA

I could be home watching 'Cagney and Lacey'.

We know, Gloria. Chow down. More pulsating music. No takers. Robin leans over to Savannah, conspiratorially.

ROBIN

(whispering)

If I tell you something, you promise not to tell Bernie or Gloria?

Since we're playing Romper Room here, do I have a choice...

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED: (2)

50

SAVANNAH

I promise.

ROBIN

I let Russell spend the night last Saturday. And girl, I whipped something on him so tough he hated to leave.

SAVANNAH

So he spent the whole night?

ROBIN

He couldn't. He had to take his mama to church early the next morning.

Savannah slurps the last of her drink. This girl is pitiful.
Bernie finally returns, flushed, having a great time...

BERNADINE

Why aren't you deadbeats out there dancing?

Gloria nibbling on a drummette.

GLORIA

You better watch yourself with that man.

What the hell is she talking about?

BERNADINE

Herbert, the fox?

Gloria gives her a look. She knows she knows.

BERNADINE

He's an old friend, Gloria. His wife's at home. But I'm here.

GLORIA

Oh well. That makes him eligible.

Robin's glance wanders toward the entrance.

BERNADINE

...I'm sweating like a pig in here.

ROBIN

I don't even believe this shit.

GLORIA

Which one is it this time?

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED: (3)

50

And they all turn to see that it's Michael! With a fox on his arms. Sophisticated. A class act. And she's clearly enthralled with him. Holding his hand. Bodies touching. Michael looks damn good, too.

SAVANNAH

So what's the big deal?

Robin looks envious and sorrowful. This woman is no slouch. She knows what she's got and appreciates it. Why couldn't I?

ROBIN

It hasn't been a week since I fired him.
I mean he was talking marriage.

Michael and his girl pass right by them. He smiles. Nods hello. Robin looks right through them.

GLORIA

You dropped him. So don't embarrass yourself. And please don't embarrass us.

ROBIN

I wouldn't give him the satisfaction.
(beat)
The little fat fuck.

Bernie returns with her drink.

BERNADINE

Girl, did you see Michael?

ROBIN

Michael who?

Robin is awkward now. Even embarrassed. Looks from one friend to another, each of whom stare directly at her.

51 INT. CAR - EVENING

51

TROY, 29, GQ-handsome, is driving Robin through a tacky neighborhood in his 1980 Cadillac. He's wearing Ray-Bans. Needs them, as the sky is a radiant reddish-orange. He's chain-smoking. His BEEPER goes off. Again. Robin's face is against the window, but she's looking at him.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

I've only known him three days but I
already feel close to him.

The uphill road is getting darker.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

I wish he didn't smoke. But I can live
with one bad habit.

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

51

Lights another cigarette, checks his beeper. Robin cracks her window. She's uneasy. He sees it.

TROY

He's real cool people. A lawyer. But down to earth. You'll like him.

52 EXT. DRUG HOUSE - NIGHT

52

Finally, pull into a long driveway. Huge Santa Fe house. He gives Robin a juicy kiss. She doesn't quite respond...

53 INT. HOUSE - ANGLE ON BILL - NIGHT

53

A white guy, also very hyper, wearing Mike Tyson T-shirt, faded jeans, greets them. Marble floors. High-tech home. Everything is black and white. Bill ushers them into the sunken living room where four men sit leaning over a mirror,

snorting lines. One's white, smoking a joint, passes it to Troy. They all know each other. Robin is in shock...

...and her tone, posture and body language change, much like we saw in her at her parents' house. She is clearly uncomfortable here.

BILL

Would you like some wine, lady?

In her good-girl, professional voice...

ROBIN

I don't think we have time, do we?

Troy, with a straw in his hand, winks at her.

TROY

We've got time for a glass of wine.

54 EXT. DRUG HOUSE - NIGHT (LATER)

54

As Troy puts his triangular package in his shirt pocket, they head for the car. Robin is fuming. Holding it in. She slams her door. He gets in cautiously.

TROY

Is something wrong, baby?

ROBIN

I didn't know you were into this kind of thing.

TROY

I just do it for recreation. Does it bother you?

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED:

54

She shoots him a look that answers his question.

TROY

Then I won't do it around you. How's that?

He starts the car up. Her face is back against the window. What the fuck have I gotten myself into?

55 INT. SAVANNAH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

55

Savannah stares out glass windows of her office which overlook a dark and empty production stage. She sighs then turns to her overly crowded desk and begins laying out several files. God, this is a nightmare! Chooses one, starts reading on the way to the tiny office fridge. Without looking, she...

...pulls out half a CUCUMBER, bites off the head. She paces, skimming pages, worrying like hell over this production, and hits speaker option on her phone, dials a number, waits a beat, then punches in three more digits, and continues pacing, reading, and eating.

When she hears that voice, she stops chewing. Stops reading. Stops everything.

KENNETH (O.S.)

Savannah, this is Kenneth. Hope you haven't forgotten me. I'll be out your way next month for a medical conference. It would mean a lot to me to see you. Hope you're well.

Clearly they have a past. She begins to move aimlessly through other work stations.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

God, I used to crave this man.

Damn. Thinks reflectively. Unconsciously presses the cucumber against her chest.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

He treated me like a lady. Once you get used to being treated well, you can't go back to bullshit.

As she starts to dial...

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

No mystery how he got my number...

(phone ringing)

It was sickening how she drooled over him
being a doctor. She cooked him feasts,
flirted with him, got free advice on nine
different diseases she wouldn't ever
have.

(beat)

Hi, Mama. How you doing?

MAMA (O.S.)

Well. Since you asked. My hair ain't
been dyed in so long my roots is green.

SAVANNAH

...Mama, why'd you give Kenneth my
number?

A beat. While Mama decides to admit...

MAMA (O.S.)

Because he asked for it.

Silence.

MAMA (O.S.)

(innocent)

Why? Is he coming out there or
something?

SAVANNAH

You tell me.

MAMA (O.S.)

He'll be there on the twenty-sixth.
Ain't you excited?

SAVANNAH

Mama. Kenneth is married.

MAMA (O.S.)

Well how happy could he be if he went out
of his way to call me to find you?

SAVANNAH

Mama, please.

MAMA (O.S.)

Please my behind. I'll be glad when you
come off your high horse and stop trying
to act like you don't need nothing or
nobody. Every woman needs a man, and you
ain't no exception.

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED: (2)

55

Just now, it's a little hard listening to this.

SAVANNAH

Love you, Mama. Talk to you soon.

Hangs up. Stares at phone. Folds her arms across chest once more.

SAVANNAH (VOICE OVER)

I won't squeeze him back when he hugs me.

I will not look him in the eyes.

(real conviction)

And I'm definitely not going to fuck him.

56 INT. ROBIN'S APARTMENT - SAME NIGHT

56

Robin's still got an attitude, and slings her keys and purse on the sofa, while the door closes on Troy. He eases through, leans against it. What a photograph he'd make. Aw baby...

TROY

I think you're making too big a deal about this. It ain't about nothin'...

Marching around, not knowing quite what to do. Sorts mail.

ROBIN

I think we should cool out for a while.

Posing for her. Or himself. Smiles confidently.

TROY

This comes at sort of a bad time.

ROBIN

Why? 'Cause you want some tonight? I'm too tired.

He gets the wine from the fridge. Quite at home here.

TROY

I'm not talking about tonight. I'm talking about tomorrow.

She looks at him. And what does that mean?

TROY

My mother wanted me to invite you over for a barbecue.

Sure. Tell me another lie.

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED:

56

TROY

You think I'm making this up because you're mad. Go ahead. Call her at 555-5467.

ROBIN

Why do you want me to meet your mama and I've only known you three days?

TROY

Maybe because I feel a little differently about you than you seem to feel about me.

He puts his hands on her, and strokes her affectionately. Nestles her inside those fantastic arms...

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

No man had ever asked me to meet his mother before...

...he gives her a tender and romantic kiss.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

Maybe he isn't into the stuff all that much. And maybe if we got to know each other better...

He's truly delicious.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

...I might be a good influence on him.

She closes her eyes. Here to stay awhile.

57 EXT. OSTRICH FESTIVAL - TWILIGHT

57

Gloria and Bernie are eating frozen yogurt, walking along the perimeter of this parade of 200,000 people who all look ridiculous in various Native American costumes but all are wearing some form of Ostrich feathers!! Both women are pretty used to this, and during their conversation, we SEE the colorful array of folks pass by...

BERNADINE

...a whole apartment building, right here in town! Two hundred acres of farmland in California! A vineyard in Arizona. I didn't even know they made wine in Arizona!

Gloria picking out chocolate chips with spoon...

GLORIA

Girl, this mess would get you a week on Sally Jessey.

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

57

BERNADINE

This is how women get screwed. Too lazy to look out for ourselves, so we put all of our trust in our husbands.

Bernie's looking for the trash to toss her cup in. None.

BERNADINE

But I've finally got the answer...

Gloria stops chewing.

GLORIA

You got the answer to that one, you on the cover of Newsweek, Cosmo and probably Psychology Today.

BERNADINE

...just never get. Fucking. Married.

GLORIA

Well, lots of us got that answer.

Bernie walks through the crowd until she finds the trash. It's full. Pushes top down over it.

BERNADINE

Girl, Onika had a temperature of 104 and an ear infection and I was so messed up... I'm a terrible mother...the mortgage is way past due, John won't pay it unless I roll over and take the dime he offered for the settlement, his lawyer's gonna drag this out for a zillion years, and meanwhile...

Suddenly, it's as if she's finally assimilating the full depth of how screwed up things really are. Bernie's pager beeps. She looks down at it, and a momentary look of embarrassment crosses her face.

GLORIA

If I ask you something, promise you won't get mad?

BERNADINE

What?

GLORIA

Have you been messing around with Herbert?

Bernie's heretofore sense of gratitude now turns defensive.

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED: (2)

57

BERNADINE

I spent one solitary evening with him.

On Gloria's look:

BERNADINE

He's calling my house at all hours of the night. He showed up at my house -- my daughter answered the door! Freaked me right out. I tap danced for a man for eleven years and I'm not about to go out and get a new owner.

GLORIA

(sighs)

Bernie.

BERNADINE

Look. I didn't wanna marry him. I just wanted to get laid. So I did.

GLORIA

How can you say that?

BERNADINE

(spent)

Easy. Men've been doing the shit for years...

...now she looks directly at her pudgy friend...

BERNADINE

This is something you couldn't possibly understand. I'm not used to living like you. I need somebody to hold me. Even if it's a damn lie.

Bernie's obviously a little peeved because she's being judged by a woman who's damn near asexual...

...and Gloria is offended because she knows it's the truth. Neither has room for words now. Gloria tries to scoop out the rest of her yogurt but clearly it's gone, while Bernie pretends not to be anxious to return that call.

BERNADINE

Look. It's late.

Gloria looks at her watch.

GLORIA

You're right. Can I use your phone for a second?

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED: (3)

57

Bernie takes a folding phone from her purse and hands it to Gloria who dials her number and waits for Tarik to answer while the dancers are removing their headdresses and masks. As it keeps ringing, her anger and disbelief builds to...

GLORIA

Forgive me. I've gotta get home and murder my son.

Bernie takes the phone, leaves it in the ready-for-dialing position.

58 INT./EXT. GLORIA'S HOUSE - SAME NIGHT

58

Gloria's on a mission, and up the steps she goes, without any sign of the strain we saw earlier, and without making so much as a peep and without knocking, when she reaches Tarik's closed door, she barges right in...

...and her hand flaps against her chest because her son is sitting on the edge of his bed, pants down to his ankles, and a blonde head is bobbing between his legs. Before he can say or do anything...

GLORIA

GET OUT OF MY GODDAMN HOUSE!

Tarik pushes the girl away, stands up so fast that Gloria, who still has a horrific look on her face, doesn't even realize she's backing away to let the girl DART by, clutching her clothes. Hear her footsteps flying down the stairs. Somewhere, a door slams.

Gloria can't look at him. Falls heavily onto the nearest chair, wondering how she's going to handle this...

TARIK

(sincere)

I'm real sorry, Ma.

Gloria cuts her eyes at him.

GLORIA

I told you you were grounded.

TARIK

That's why I invited her to come over here.

How fucking brilliant. But this has been one long, trying night...

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

58

GLORIA

You know. I'm about sick of this shit!
If your daddy wasn't gay I swear I'd send
your black ass straight to him!

Tarik's eyes are wide open. What did she just say?

GLORIA (VOICE OVER)

Shit.

He appears to be amazed and a little amused by this news.

TARIK

You mean he's a faggot?

GLORIA

I don't like that word.

He's actually smiling, as he sits down on the desk, facing her.

TARIK

Faggot. Homo. Gay. What's the
difference.

(beat)

So my daddy's queer?

Now he's out and out laughing.

TARIK

Well, one thing you know for sure. It
definitely doesn't run in the family.

GLORIA

I think you better watch your mouth.

TARIK

I'm sorry, Ma.

GLORIA

You're sorry about everything, aren't
you, Tarik? You're sorry about your
grades. Sorry because you lied to me.
Sorry for letting white girls come into
my house and suck your seventeen-year-old
dick. What're you gonna be sorry about
next?

He has no answer. He's both ashamed and hurt.

GLORIA

(quietly)

Just get out of my face.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED: (2)

58

She closes her eyes. When she hears his steps trudging down the stairs, she opens them. The only role she thought she was good at was parent, and now she's losing there too.

59- INT. ROBIN'S BEDROOM/INT. SAVANNAH'S BEDROOM -
60 SAME NIGHT

59-
60

INTERCUT phone conversation. Each in their beds.

ROBIN

...I know. But he says he only does it sometimes.

SAVANNAH

What do you expect him to say? 'I'm a crack head?'

ROBIN

So you think I shouldn't go to the barbecue?

SAVANNAH

I'll put it this way. What have you done in three days with this man besides screw him that would make knowing you so deep he wants to bring you home to meet his mama?

Silence at Robin's end.

SAVANNAH

I mean a barbecue. Pa-leeze.

Maybe Savannah's got a point...

ROBIN

I can't call him though because I put his card in my wallet and now I can't find it anywhere.

Savannah shakes her head...

SAVANNAH

Well, that's definitely surprising.

Robin doesn't even get it. Phone clicks.

ROBIN

Hold on a minute.

(beat)

Hello.

RUSSELL (O.S.)

How you doing?

(CONTINUED)

59- CONTINUED:

59-

60

60

Her face lights up at the sound of his voice. Discards a doll.

RUSSELL (O.S.)

I miss you, baby.

Blushing. Pleased to hear it. She actually believes him.

ROBIN

Since when?

RUSSELL (O.S.)

Since I've been gone.

(beat)

You feel like some company?

With no hesitation whatsoever...

ROBIN

Yes.

RUSSELL (O.S.)

See you in fifteen.

Click.

ROBIN

Savannah. I've gotta go. It's something I've gotta do.

But Savannah's not buying it.

SAVANNAH

Is it Russell?

ROBIN

No, it's not Russell. And so what if it is?

SAVANNAH

Enjoy the low-life while you can. Bye.

Hangs up, softly.

SAVANNAH

You are one hard-up stupid bitch.

61 EXT. BAPTIST CHURCH - EASTER SUNDAY

61

Bernie, Gloria, Savannah and Robin are exiting the church. They are each decked out in Easter Sunday-type suits and all are wearing a serious hat. A herd of children, including Bernie's, run past them with Easter Baskets in tow, heading for the grassy area where an Easter Egg Hunt is about to start. Quite a bit of hugging and handshaking going on with

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

61

long-lost worshipers who only show up on major holidays to clearly show off their new duds. Savannah's feet hurt. It's too hot. Gloria's suit is too tight. Robin's overdressed for church: ruffles and cleavage prevail. Bernie and Savannah sneak off to smoke a cigarette...

62 INT./EXT. BERNADINE'S HOUSE - SUNDAY EVENING

62

Bernie's still in her Easter attire, watching 60 Minutes, when she hears a car pull up.

She opens the door. The kids are now running up the walkway. John's watching them. Onika runs to give her mama a hug. JJ walks. All dressed up, presents in hand.

JOHN
What's up, Ma?

ONIKA
Hi, Mama!

BERNADINE
Well I certainly missed you guys. Two days is a long time not t...

ONIKA
Guess what Mama? Daddy and Kathleen are getting married and you should see the ring he gave her. It's ten times bigger than yours!

Looking triumphant because she beat JJ to the punch.

Bernie tries to ignore it all. As JJ removes items from his backpack he doesn't take his eyes off his blabbermouth sister, but Onika's not finished...

ONIKA
Kathleen taked us to the mall yesterday and she buyed me three new dresses but Daddy told me to leave them at their new house.

BERNADINE (VOICE OVER)
What new house? And who's damn money paid for it?

BERNADINE
Well that was nice of her to be so generous. And you know how to talk. It's took. Not taked. Bought. Not buyed.

Onika pulls out a Barbie doll from a box. Strokes her blonde hair.

ONIKA
It's way bigger than our house.

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED:

62

So what...

JOHN JR.

I like our house better.

As Onika blabs on, it's clear that JJ is getting more and more fed up with her...

ONIKA

Daddy said Kathleen will be able to spend more time with us because now we have two Mamas.

JOHN JR.

No we don't.

ONIKA

We do too. And guess what else, Mama?

JOHN JR.

Why don't you just shut up.

Of course she ignores him because she saved the best for last...

ONIKA

Kathleen's having a baby and we're gonna have a brand new baby sister or brother in five months!

Bernie's tears begin. It confuses and upsets her to find herself crying over this asshole.

BERNADINE

I'm really glad to hear all this. It's the best goddamn news I've had all day and I hope your sorry-ass daddy is happy with his little white whore!

...and she storms o.s. to her bedroom...

63 INT. BERNADINE'S BEDROOM - EVENING

63

ANGLE ON her going through the door, SLAMMING it so hard that it pops back open a few inches...

She throws herself across the bed, but she can still hear...

JOHN JR. (O.S.)

See what you did you little bitch! You made her cry!

ONIKA (O.S.)

I did'n...

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED:

63

Bernie hears the SLAP. It makes her blink. She jumps off the bed, peers through the door to see...

64 INT. BERNADINE'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - EVENING

64

JOHN JR.

That's for having such a big mouth. You think she's supposed to be happy knowing that white lady is having a baby for our daddy?

Onika is too stunned and frightened to utter another word. Bernie is proud. Not just anybody, but her son is on her side.

JOHN JR.

If you go near her room anytime tonight I'll slap you again. Only harder.

Bernie is laughing soundless. Through quite a few tears.

65 INT. BERNADINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (A LITTLE LATER)

65

Bernie's sitting in bed. TV on. JJ comes in.

JOHN JR.

Are you okay, Ma?

BERNADINE

Of course I'm okay. I've got my main man looking after me.

He tries to take her gratitude casually, like the man she's describing him to be. Watching him be cool is pretty charming.

Bernie pulls out a 2 lb. box of Godiva chocolates. He's still cool, but we CAN SEE that these are his absolute favorites. He climbs on the bed next to her. Opens the box. Reaches for a piece, looks over to her eyes. She shakes her head very slightly.

BERNADINE

Coconut.

He reaches for a different one. She closes her eyes and barely nods her head. Perfect choice. He picks it up, breaks it in half, and holds the larger half out to her. She smiles. This is getting better and better. Takes the chocolate from her gentleman's hand, and as she eats it, she flicks the remote to a basketball game.

They settle back to watch it together.

66 INT. ROBIN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

66

Robin looks a little nervous when answering the door and Troy stands there, his eyes bloodshot, with a growth of hair on his face. She is appalled.

TROY
You ready, baby?

ROBIN
I'm not going.

TROY
What? Why not?

ROBIN
Because I don't like this.

TROY
You don't like what?

She folds her arms. I don't have to answer this.

TROY
Oh. So what am I supposed to tell my mother and my son and the rest of the family?

She doesn't budge, but holds onto her position. She likes this feeling of power. Never felt it before.

ROBIN
Excuse me? Your son? How old is this son?

TROY
DeMar's almost thirteen. What's your point?

He tries to ease up to her but her body language says don't come any closer...

ROBIN
My point is. I don't think we know each other well enough to have family reunions just yet.

He's getting pissed. Not used to being rejected...

TROY
And what am I supposed to tell 'em?

ROBIN
Anything you want to.

TROY
Oh, so I'm just supposed to accept this?

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

66

ROBIN

You don't have a choice. You should've asked before committing me.

TROY

I did ask you.

ROBIN

No. You told me.

He decides to up the stakes...

TROY

Do you know how many women would love for me to bring them to my house to meet my mother?

ROBIN

I can about guess.

TROY

You black bitches are all alike. You complain that don't nobody want your asses or know how to treat you and then when a brother shows genuine interest in you, you act simple. And y'all wanna know why we go out with white women!

...And he stalks out and SLAMS the door in HER face.

ROBIN

A white woman can have your sorry ass.

Robin's still standing there when the door flies back open. She looks frightened.

TROY

Be more careful who you pick up in grocery stores.

Door SLAMS. Words to live by.

67- INT. SAVANNAH'S BEDROOM/INT. ROBIN'S BEDROOM -

67-

68

INTERCUT phone conversation. In their own beds.

68

Apparently, Savannah's been listening for a while.

SAVANNAH

So. I guess you know who's got your wallet?

Robin's eating Haagen Dazs from the carton. Stops just before the spoonful reaches her mouth.

(CONTINUED)

67- CONTINUED:

67-

68

68

ROBIN

What? You think he stole it?

Warm smile.

SAVANNAH

Bye, bitch.

Hang up the phone. Real soft.

A69 INT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

A69

Bernie, Gloria, Robin and Savannah are weaving quickly through the crowded area, long lines of concert-goers trying to get in, scalpers, fast food and novelty concessions. All in T-shirt, jeans, sneakers. Except Robin. Overdressed. When they announce opening act over the PA, the sound of familiar MUSIC causes the women to step on it. Bernie squeezes her bag of popcorn under one arm. Gloria's already guzzling a hot dog. Mustard oozes onto her blouse. Robin points to it. Savannah grabs a napkin from a counter, wipes it off, daps around Gloria's mouth like she's a baby. Not funny to Gloria.

Robin is the first to see a HANDSOME black man holding hands with a HOMELY white woman walk in their direction. She pushes her hip hard into Bernie's, who gapes. Is this an epidemic? Robin falls against a brick wall, grabs her throat and feigns choking herself. Now all the women are staring at the couple as Bernie tosses a handful of popcorn at Robin. Music is LOUD and PULSATING now.

The couple is oblivious to them, and as they pass, Bernie makes a monster face behind the woman. Savannah pushes her forward, rocking her head back forth as they walk, apparently chastising her. Robin grabs onto Gloria for support. Gloria shrugs her off, looks at each of them with a stone face. They're acting too childish. Savannah laughs anyway. They saunter onward as Gloria lulls behind.

Now here comes a 6'3" woman in DAISY DUKES, body to die for, cleavage for days, strutting almost to a beat. The women can't help but stare. She's GORGEOUS. As she gets closer to them Robin mouths the words: SHE'S A MAN! And the women all see that she's a TRANSVESTITE! They are too shocked. Robin simply pokes out her breasts and imitates the woman's work-it-gait. Now, even deadbeat Gloria is laughing.

LATER

along with hundreds of others, all four women are on their feet, dancing wildly to the music, laughing, tipsy, screaming, singing along...having big fun...

69 EXT. HOUSE ACROSS FROM GLORIA - DAY

69

The sky is a soft blue, with a tint of yellow, as Gloria walks up the driveway, past a navy blue Buick sedan parked behind a moving van, peeking in to see what kind of stuff these folks have. Truck's almost empty. She knocks, even though the front door is wide open. An attractive black man is moving furniture. Carefully picks up a lamp. He's in jeans and T-shirt. Tall. Strong.

MARVIN

Well, hello there.

GLORIA

Hello. I'm Gloria Matthews. I live across the street, and was wondering what you know about the people moving in here?

Wipes his brow with a handkerchief. Looks around to make sure no one's listening.

MARVIN

Well, in my opinion, this guy seems kind of nasty and ignorant. And bossy.

Oh. But Gloria is more aware of his presence. Can't help but notice how handsome this worker is. Okay now. Bossy...

GLORIA

What about the wife?

He's noticing Gloria, now, too. Trying to be cool about it. Picks up the lamp, holds it like a trophy.

MARVIN

Oh, his wife died a few years ago and this is just one of many precious items she bought him that I'm making sure don't get damaged.

GLORIA

Why's he trusting you with it?

Game's over. And he laughs heartily.

MARVIN

I'm Marvin King. Your new neighbor. I was just fooling around. Nice to meet you Gloria.

She's suddenly embarrassed for assuming he was a worker because he's black, and then pleased because this good-looking man's her neighbor.

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED:

69

GLORIA

Well, I wanted to welcome you and your family to the neighborhood. Unpacking is hard work.

MARVIN

It certainly is, and I've got more coming tomorrow.

She saw his lips move, but didn't hear any sound. What's going on here?

GLORIA

Would you like to have dinner with us tonight? It's just leftovers. Collard greens and corn bread, some candied yams, a little potato salad, fried chicken, peach cobbler and a few slices of ham.

MARVIN

I would love to, but I've got so much to do around here. Maybe some other time.

Gloria's not sure if she's being rejected or not.

GLORIA

(fishing for a compliment)

To be honest, I don't have no business eating any of it as big as I am.

MARVIN

My wife was a big woman, too. I like a woman with some meat on her bones.

She is relieved. Flattered, really. Now what?

GLORIA

Well, I'd be more than happy to send a plate over by my son, Tarik.

MARVIN

I'd appreciate that. How old is your son?

GLORIA

Seventeen.

MARVIN

A teenager.

GLORIA

He'll be gone in June. I think.

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: (2)

69

MARVIN
College?

She's gone deaf again.

GLORIA
I'm sorry. What did you just ask me?

Marvin chuckles.

MARVIN
Is your son going to college?

GLORIA
He wants to travel around the world with
an organization called Up With People,
but I'm not so sure I wa...

MARVIN
Let him go. He's young. Where's his
daddy?

GLORIA
In California. Somewhere.

Doesn't want to get into this...

GLORIA
Well Marvin, I'll let you get back to
work and I'll send that plate on over.

MARVIN
Thank you, Gloria. Nice to meet you, and
I hope to be seeing you real soon.

She heads for the door...

GLORIA
I sure hope so.

ANGLE ON HER

crossing the street. She's giddy. We've never seen Gloria
like this before. Even she's amazed. Her steps are so
graceful she appears to be floating. She looks over her
shoulder to sneak a look, and Marvin's standing in the
doorway, smiling at her as if she were a newly discovered
treasure. He waves. She returns a tiny, fluttery one.
Tickled as she wants to be.

GLORIA (VOICE OVER)
No man ever waited to watch me cross the
street before.

69A INT. BATHROOM - LATER

69A

Gloria's in a frilly robe, filling the bathtub, searching through an arsenal of bubble bath. Takes a whiff of one. Then another. Says yes to the Lavender. Pours pretty much the entire bottle in. Candles are burning! Seems to be a glass of bubbly near the tub. And out of nowhere we hear some soulful rock-me-hold-me-music. She's got a smirk on her face a mile wide. Drops her robe. We SEE her pedicured toes go into the tub...

ANGLE ON HER

easing the top of her body under the bubbles, where she closes her eyes and sinks. She's day dreaming. And it's good because she suddenly covers her mouth. Gloria is blushing.

70 INT. COURTROOM - DAY

70

Bernie and John sit next to their respective lawyers, both staring up at the JUDGE, a stern-looking, spectacled man in his 60's. Bernie's scared frozen. John comfortable.

JUDGE

...grant the petitioner \$3,000 per month until such time as we are able to fully review all newly submitted documentation.

Pounds his gavel. Next.

John apparently feels pretty damn good about this decision. He and his lawyer get up, head toward the door.

Bernie looks dumbstruck, hopeless, like she's just been robbed. Her lawyer is trying to console her, but Bernie isn't listening, as she pushes her chair to the side, rushes up behind John grabs his jacket sleeve, yanks on it hard enough to RIP, and then shoves him so hard he stumbles into a group of people.

BERNADINE

You sorry son-of-a-bitch.. The mortgage is \$5,000. How are your kids supposed to live? Huh?...

John brushes off his suit, gives Bernie a very slow maddening smile.

JOHN

I told you to settle for the \$300,000. But you wanna play hardball, so...

...and Bernie grabs a briefcase and throws it at him. John catches it, sets it down, and heads toward the door.

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED:

70

BERNADINE
ALL DOGS DON'T GO TO HEAVEN! YOU THINK
YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH THIS? YOU LOW-LIFE
ASS-KISSIN'UNCLE TOM...

...and she's about to run after him when her lawyer grabs her client's arm and stops her forcibly. Enough is enough. Looking in her eyes. Bernie goes limp. She's losing. Bad.

71 INT. RITZ CARLTON HOTEL BAR - EVENING

71

Bernadine is sitting at the bar, alone, stirring the whipped cream of her strawberry daiquiri. She is the only black person in this dark, ornate room. A pianist plays classical music. She's not sure why she's here.

JAMES
(o.s.; baritone)
Is anybody sitting here?

She swivels around to see a tall, beautiful black man in a tailored black suit, standing behind her. She is immediately embarrassed because it's undeniable that she's alone...

BERNADINE
No. Nobody's sitting there.

And she basically ignores him.

JAMES
My name's James Wheeler. How you doing
this evening?

Not looking at him...

BERNADINE
Fine. Just fine. Thank you.

Because her eyes are on her drink, when he holds out his hand to shake, she doesn't see it. He looks a little daunted by this, and places his hands gently on the bar. Just trying to be friendly...

She gives him a can't-you-take-a-hint look. He smiles at her anyway. And what a smile it is. She's inclined to react to it, but his wedding ring gets her attention. It figured.

JAMES
If I'm intruding, I apologize.

BERNADINE
It's okay.

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED:

71

Now she's starting to notice what she's been ignoring: the deepness of his voice, those huge hands, that shiny moustache, those succulent lips, straight white teeth, his confident demeanor, his...

JAMES

It's my last night in town, and I must admit, you're the most stunning thing I've seen since I've been here.

Don't fall for it. Try cordial...

BERNADINE

Thank you.

He knows she thinks this is a come-on or a pick-up, and wants to assure her that it's not...

JAMES

Relax. I haven't seen the sun in four days, it's been one meeting after another. I just stopped down to have a drink before turning in, and tomorrow I'm looking forward to going home to my wife.

Bernadine is both surprised by, and grateful for his honesty. She knows too, why he said it. Appreciates it. She finally returns his smile.

JAMES

So, why are you here alone?

(beat)

Don't feel obligated to answer that. After all. I'm a complete stranger.

She just looks at him. And...She takes a sip of her drink. Why am I telling him this?

BERNADINE

I'm getting a divorce and it just occurred to me that I've lost something that once meant everything. So I guess that's why I'm here.

James is genuinely moved by her candor.

BERNADINE

And I'm pissed off. Because he hurt me, I didn't have a Plan B. And my marriage was supposed to last.

He knows what happened. Typical. She doesn't have to explain.

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED: (2)

71

JAMES

Well, I have to say one thing. You're brave. I hope you realize that.

In what sense?

JAMES

The way you came in here alone. Your attitude. You've had your loss, taken your hit. And here you are.

Holds her eyes.

JAMES

You won't stop. You're coming all the way back. I can tell that.

BERNADINE

'Cause you know me so well.

JAMES

I don't know you, but I do know that much. One look in your eyes, and I saw it.

BERNADINE

Are you a shrink or something?

JAMES

(chuckles)

No. I'm a civil rights lawyer. I live in Washington, D.C. I'm going through something similar, but completely opposite.

His smile softly fades.

JAMES

My wife is dying. Of breast cancer. And watching her suffer kills me a little bit each day. I keep remembering our dreams. Our plans to retire in St. Thomas. She loves the ocean. She's the most loving, tender...

Bernadine's close to tears hearing him say this.

JAMES

She never wanted kids. And I did, but I always thought there'd be time. We always think there'll be time, don't we?

We do.

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED: (3)

71

BERNADINE

You're a young man, you'll have your
children some d...

JAMES

...but they won't be hers.

Trying not to get too remorseful, but hell, it's hard and...

JAMES

I guess I wish I could have a piece of
her. Safe. Something more than
memories.

Bernadine is astonished by what he's said. You can see that
she is comfortable with this stranger because he's not one
now...

JAMES

Can I buy you another drink?

Bernadine nods yes. Now she wants to hear everything he
wants to tell her. She's listening to a man's heart. He
knows she needs to say more, and he's here for her. A
connection has been made. They both know it. Both feel it.

72 INT. SAVANNAH'S APARTMENT - EVENING

72

Savannah's moving a mile a minute. Can see that she's
changed at least four times, and has decided on a smart,
cream silk pantsuit. Doesn't dare want to look suggestive.
Fusses with her hair. She's anxious, but now that she's
finished. Shit. Her hands look dry. Is rubbing lotion on
them when the doorbell rings...

ANGLE ON HER

coming down the stairs. Now moving slowly because she's
hyperventilating, panting out air rings. She takes a final
breath before opening the door and...

...Kenneth's standing there with his hands in his pockets.
Smiling, somewhat nervous. His eyes say, damn, it's good to
see you, but he's not exactly sure what's appropriate to say
or do, so he blurts out his first impression...

KENNETH

(softly)

You look better than I remember...

And he doesn't move. His shyness calms her, lets her
smile...

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED:

72

SAVANNAH

That's funny. You don't.

(beat)

I guess you couldn't.

He's grateful hearing this. She murmurs...

SAVANNAH

Come on in.

She backs away from the door, he still has his hands in his pockets, walks past her, and feeling increasingly awkward, starts to wander around the room looking at her furnishings and artwork.

KENNETH

Lovely. Really lovely.

SAVANNAH

Let me show you around.

He notices an arrangement of glass vases. Almost touches one. Small smile.

KENNETH

(softly)

You always did know how to do this stuff.

As she leads him around the place, she's watching him cautiously. Waiting, wondering what his real agenda is. Becoming increasingly confused because it seems like he's putting whatever it is, off. By the time they get upstairs inside her bedroom, which is ultra-feminine and sensuously inviting, she can see that he's somewhat uncomfortable. She's trying to be cool, as she observes the man she's loved for years stand in front of her favorite painting.

SAVANNAH

Kenneth, it's good to see you. I'm just not sure what...

KENNETH

...what this all means. Yeah.

A lot on his mind. So much to say. But where to start? Deep breath.

KENNETH

You mind taking a walk?

HOLD ON her. More intrigued than ever.

73 EXT. STREET - EVENING

73

They're walking down Fifth Avenue, a quiet street lined with one Southwestern shop after another. The sky is pink. Southwestern paraphernalia in most store windows. They pretend to admire some items. Been talking a while already.

SAVANNAH

...next month I'm producing my very first segment. It's only three minutes, but it's a start.

He smiles, impressed.

SAVANNAH

Are we gonna talk for real or what?

Oh.

KENNETH

(sincere)

I have to apologize for thinking I can just pop back into your life after all these years.

SAVANNAH

Pop back.

KENNETH

Well. I needed to see you.

SAVANNAH

Okay. You've seen me. So you can leave now. Bye.

They both laugh at this. She's trying to make this a little easier for him, but still waiting to hear the truth. This is hard for him, too. Wants to be honest, but damn.

KENNETH

There's so much I want to say to you, things I've wanted to say ever since...you know ever since you dumped me.

Savannah stops dead in her tracks.

SAVANNAH

Can we just temporarily revisit the real world here? Kenneth you stopped calling me.

KENNETH

(nods)

...took me a while to take the hint, huh?

The hint.

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED:

73

KENNETH

You never called me. To go anywhere.
Not even once.

Now she feels awkward because in a sense, it's true.

SAVANNAH

Well, you're the man.

(beat)

I mean, that wasn't ...the nature of our
relationship.

He looks straight in her eyes.

KENNETH

I know. The nature of our relationship
was, I was in love with a woman who was
too nice to hurt my feelings.

SAVANNAH

Kenneth, if you ca...you were in what?
With who?

KENNETH

Look, I know I'm married. And I love my
daughter with all my heart.

(beat)

...her mother was five months pregnant
when we married, It was my choice, I had
my eyes open. I've lived with it for
seven years now.

He reaches out. Gently takes her hand...

KENNETH

...I'm not saying this as some kind of
come on. But you are the only woman I
ever loved. And still do.

Hold on her eyes. Reading his.

74 INT. SAVANNAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

74

Kenneth is slowly and ever-so carefully undressing her. He
does love her. She is something precious he's lost and now
he may have it back. He's in no hurry. Looks at her.
Caresses her. Looks at her some more. Savannah's lost in
him...

ANGLE...on them making love, at first very soft and delicate,
almost fragile, and then it becomes BLAZINGLY HOT, succulent,
liquid. These two need each other. Love each other. Have
craved each other. And now they've given themselves
permission to drown in this passion.

75 INT. HOTEL ROOM DOORWAY - NIGHT

75

A woman's hand nervously turns the key and pushes the door open. Bernadine walks through it alone. James steps in right behind her. She's scared. This is all new to her. Stares out at city lights because she doesn't know what else to do, until she feels James' heartbeat against her back, and his arms around her.

JAMES

You feeling okay?

BERNADINE

Nervous.

But it's obvious she needs this. Him. Now.

JAMES

Having second thoughts?

BERNADINE

I'm having all kinds of thoughts.

He begins to rock her in a comforting way.

JAMES

Well, if it's any consolation. I've never done this before.

BERNADINE

Sure.

JAMES

I don't lie. Because it always comes back.

(beat)

I haven't made love to a woman in more than a year. Since Lauren...stopped wanting to.

He stops rocking and places his hands on her shoulders.

JAMES

There are two things I have to tell you even though you may throw me out after you hear it.

She doesn't want to ruin this dream she's having, it's been so long...

BERNADINE

You don't have to say anything.

Yes I do...

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED:

75

JAMES

You told me that the woman your husband is marrying is white. Well so is my wife...

We SEE Bernie's eyes blink, but she doesn't move.

JAMES

I could stand here and tell you the only reason I'm still with her is because she's dying, but that's not true.

Bernie steps back, just a little. She's not sure how to take this, but listens...

JAMES

She's the only woman I've ever really loved - still love. And I would never leave her as long as she's breathing.

She looks at him a long time and realizes this man is being honest and sincere and he's not bullshitting her. He's not running away from his problems, he's sticking it out with his wife. And we SEE her expression has changed to that of respect. She's glad she's met him...

BERNADINE

Well, I've got two things to tell you.

He's willing to accept whatever she says...

BERNADINE

What you said hurts like hell, but it may also be the most wonderful thing any man has ever said to me...

(beat)

What do you want tonight?

Looks into her eyes and he means it when he tells her...

JAMES

To make you feel like the most beautiful woman in the world.

BERNADINE

I know what would make me feel that way.

...and he's intent on listening, doing whatever it is.

CUT TO:

75A INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAWN

75A

A yellow-orangish light sneaks through the sheer curtains. Bernie and James are sound asleep, on top of the comforter, wrapped in each other's arms, and FULLY CLOTHED.

76 INT. SAVANNAH'S KITCHEN - MORNING

76

She's putting pancakes and bacon on Kenneth's plate. She's about to enter the living room to ask him something when she hears his voice suspiciously low. She stops to listen. He's on the phone with his wife.

KENNETH (O.S.)

Sorry I didn't call after I got in.
Continuous introductions after a very
long and tedious meeting. I was whipped.

Both are listening now.

KENNETH (O.S.)

One thing is certain. I'm going to have
to make a few more trips out here before
this deal's in place.

Deeply mixed feelings. Thrilled he'll be coming back. But how does she feel about the lies? This is complex stuff.

She's pouring him a cup of coffee when he comes in, takes a hearty breath and sits down. He looks happy. Like he's her husband. Like this is their routine. But behind him the loss is already written in her eyes.

She places syrup on the table and he catches her hand and draws her down, giving her a tender kiss. She smiles but her eyes don't. He doesn't notice because he's in heaven. Goes back to his breakfast.

77 INT. GLORIA'S GARAGE - DAY

77

Marvin's drilling away in different marked spots on a wall. Sawdust is everywhere. He's wearing a well-worn tool belt. We SEE several huge storage cabinets that is apparent he's spent some time assembling. His t-shirt is drenched. As he's remeasuring an angle, we can see how important it is that he do this right. While he pushes a cabinet against the wall, Gloria comes from behind him holding a plate with a gigantic sandwich in one hand, and a 16-oz glass of lemonade in the other.

GLORIA

Marvin, will you please stop long enough
to eat this?

Marvin is glad to see her and the food. Settles the cabinet in place, smiles, and takes the plate from her. He inspects the sandwich by lifting up the top slice of bread.

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED:

77

MARVIN

What. No cheese?

Gloria freezes for a second. She screwed up. Marvin laughs, and she realizes he's just joking with her. She hasn't blushed this much in years.

78 INT. CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

78

Bernadine leads Savannah past one display after another. Hundreds of stations have prepared food setups, from box lunches to buffet dinners. Bernie checks out each one with an expert eye, shaking her head. This is torture for her. Her girl friend watching that it...

SAVANNAH

If this is bumming you out, maybe we oughta lea...

BERNADINE

This just happens to be the one thing I've wanted to do for the last ten years.

SAVANNAH

If your Mr. Wonderful from last night decides he can't live without you. Maybe he'll answer all your prayers.

BERNADINE

First of all, I can take care of myself, thank you, and secondly, I'll never hear from James again because he loves his wife. Hey, when's your married man coming to town?

A beat.

SAVANNAH

(real quiet)

Last night.

Say WHAT?

BERNADINE

This just slip your mind or something?

Out with it! Everything! Savannah smiles with a shyness we've never seen. Looks away at nothing in particular.

SAVANNAH

I don't know. I'm a little messed up behind this.

A little. She looks down.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

78

SAVANNAH
I laid awake all night.

All night. Bernie gives her the time. Because Savannah's voice is so vulnerable and real.

SAVANNAH
I thought about the whole rest of my life. With him.

You know...?

SAVANNAH
Having a kid or two. Building a home.
Making love every night. Sitting
together on the deck of some boat...not
having to say a word, because...

The feeling all there in her throat.

SAVANNAH
Growing old together. And all I could
think...all night...

Looks straight up. Into her friend's eyes.

SAVANNAH
Is how. Can I make this happen?

She studies Bernie's awkwardness. And smiles gently...

SAVANNAH
So I didn't know how to tell you...

No, I didn't.

SAVANNAH
(whispers)
That he's not John. And I'm not
Kathleen.

There it is. Such complete honesty in this moment.

SAVANNAH
So are you gonna hate me? Or should I
just hate myself?

Bernie never loved her more than now. She takes a chocolate covered strawberry from the dessert display and puts it up to Savannah's mouth.

BERNADINE
Be happy, bitch. That's all I want.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED: (2)

78

From her heart. The look holds. Savannah takes a bite. Chews, while they watch each other. Grateful. To be friends.

79 INT. ROBIN'S APARTMENT - EVENING

79

Coming in from work. She's beat. Drops purse and attache to the floor, routinely presses message machine and sinks onto the sofa.

TROY (O.S.)

Hey, Robin. I've cleaned up my act and I'm dying to see you. Call me.

Puts feet on table, pushes all magazines to the side except Victoria's Secret...

ROBIN

(flipping pages)

Get a life.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Hi, Robin. Where've you been hiding? Don't you return phone calls? Would love to get together with you this weekend. Please call me.

Drops her head back...

ROBIN

Have you learned to do the nasty yet? Are you still fat? Are you still boring?

When she hears the next voice her head springs forward...

RUSSELL (O.S.)

Robin. Please do me and yourself a favor. Stop calling me at home, My wife doesn't like the idea of my ex calling me and it's causing me major problems. Hope you're well.

CLOSE ON her face...

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

Wife?

ROBIN

Did he just say WIFE?

...and she leaps from the sofa, hurls the V.S. catalog, then flings all the magazines to the floor, picks up and throws an empty Perrier bottle against the wall, then

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED:

79

covers both ears with hands. It doesn't help and now she's freezing, rubbing both arms as if to keep warm and she's crying loudly, storming around the room, looking for some remedy for this, but knows there isn't one...

ROBIN

This is some cold, cruel shit to pull,
Russell. Low.

Keeps pushing her hair back compulsively...

ROBIN

And here I was with your sorry ass for
two whole years and you were supposed to
be so in love with me...

Steps on magazines, starts picking them up...

ROBIN

And to think I let your black ass live
here rent free for a year...ran up my
Visa bill...got you some decent
insurance...co-signed for your goddamn
car...

The Victoria's Secret catalog gets her attention. All those
gorgeous women in sexy lingerie. She picks it up, begins
thumbing through it once more, almost viciously.

ROBIN

What. Is she having your baby?

Shit.

ROBIN

I could've had two of your babies you
simple motherfucker...

She's spent, and her tears fall gently, painfully...

ROBIN

Why couldn't you have just told me what
I was doing wrong? I could've fixed
it...I swear to God...

The phone rings. Her eyes brighten. Of course she thinks
it's him. Catches it on the second ring and her face falls.

ROBIN

(sighing)
I'm afraid you have the wrong number.

Slams down the phone.

80 EXT. RESIDENTIAL AREA - EVENING

80

Robin walking numbly through and beyond her neighborhood, her arms folded. She wanders past a catholic church where we SEE various ICONS, e.g., Archangels, the Madonna holding her baby, Jesus Christ. Over this, we hear penetrating African music. Robin walks onward oblivious to the church, and even the murmur of children, parents chit-chatting in front yards, reading papers, some calling kids in for dinner.

81 INT. ROBIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

81

Robin's wearing only a T-shirt, sitting on the sofa, staring at the phone. She looks anxious, a little tense, but she decides quickly and dials. Putting on a phony seductive voice...

ROBIN

Hi Michael. Guess who this is?

Easy...

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Robin.

Here we go with raking the hair again Ms. Basic Instinct.

ROBIN

Well I got your message and I was wondering if you could come over. Maybe I'll make you dinner...

MICHAEL (O.S.)

I'd love to another time, but I'm just sitting down to dinner right now.

He's not turning me down, is he? Try another approach.

ROBIN

Well, why don't you put it in the fridge and see if I can give you something that makes it worth your while?

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Well, that wouldn't really be fair to Gina.

She sits up stiffly...

ROBIN

Gina?

MICHAEL (O.S.)

I mean she cooked a great meal and it wouldn't be very ni...

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

81

ROBIN

Michael you called me telling me how much
you missed me and you've got Marie
Callender over there setting the table?

MICHAEL (O.S.)

She's just an old friend who needed a
place to stay for a while and I'm just
trying to help her get back on her feet.

Robin's eyes literally bug out of her head. All these
motherfuckers are alike!

ROBIN

(loudly)

Well I hope you have a great time helping
her get back on her feet. She'll need
CPR and a fucking respirator after being
flat on her back with you, Mr. 30-Second
Marathon Man!

And she slams the phone down but immediately picks it back up
and punches the numbers furiously. She is fuming.

TROY

(o.s. sleepily)

Hey. It's your world, I'm just in it

She's still angry...

ROBIN

Troy?

TROY (O.S.)

Robin?

(beat)

Hey baby, it's good to hear your voice.
I've been thinking about you for weeks.
What's hap..

ROBIN

What are you doing right now?

TROY (O.S.)

Well, I was watching the ga...

She's not asking, she's telling him...

ROBIN

Why don't you come over here and watch
it.

He doesn't have to think twice...

TROY (O.S.)

I'm on my way.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED: (2)

81

Hangs up the phone. Slowly. Softly. Stares at it. What the hell am I doing? Right now she doesn't care. She needs to be rescued.

81A EXT. LAKE - LONG ANGLE - EARLY MORNING

81A

Tarik and Marvin are sitting side by side in the middle of a small fishing boat, each with a rod. Marvin puts his down to show Tarik how to do something. They're both glad to be here. With each other. After it appears as if Tarik has the hang of it, Marvin picks up his rod, casts it, and lays back. It is quiet. The air is crisp. The water calm. And they wait.

82 INT. GLORIA'S HOUSE - EVENING

82

CLOSE ON a decorative cake that says "Happy Birthday Gloria!" Funky soul music is pulsating loudly.

SAVANNAH

To the best blow drying, scissor-scalping, bumper-curling, weaving, braiding, get-this-gray-off-my-head-dying beautician west of the Mississippi.

ROBIN

Weak. I hope you find true love and get some that's so electric you won't need no blow dryer and so juicy you'll forget all about your ten-year drought.

But Bernie is not kidding. She slides an arm around her girlfriend's neck, and murmurs close...

BERNADINE

Here's to finding happiness. And peace of mind. Happy birthday, girlfriend.

The honesty of that touches Gloria. She nods her thanks. And only then does Bernie let go.

All down their drinks, hold their glasses out for more. Gloria pours. Robin's back by the albums with her drink, rolling over on her back and pounding her feet up and down...

ROBIN

Minnie Ripperton and Smokey Robinson.

BERNADINE

I don't wanna hear nothing that'll make me cry.

ROBIN

(laughing)

Well I do.

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED:

82

The champagne's working. Gloria slides into her chair, observing them like an outsider.

ROBIN

Okay! HOLD IT! Now tell me who this reminds you of. And don't lie.

All three women freeze. Ears ready. When they hear the first few bars of Teddy Pendergrass' "Turn Off The Lights", Savannah falls on her back and stares up at the ceiling, goes back in time to...

SAVANNAH

Damn. Kenneth and I danced to this whole album in my apartment. I never felt so beautiful. He held me like I'd break.

Just stays with that. And the sadness it brings.

BERNADINE

I was in love with John for real back then.

(beat)

Time can destroy anything.

They all look to...

ROBIN

This song confuses me. I was so loose in those days, I see many faces.

BERNADINE

In those days?

ROBIN

Don't get jealous because I've got pulling power, Homegirl.

They all look to Gloria. Her face is blank. She shrugs. Sorry. Savannah looks down, embarrassed. Robin pretends she doesn't notice, head is swaying from side to side.

BERNADINE

All you've missed is a lot of grief.

The look holds a beat.

83 INT. GLORIA'S HOUSE - LATER

83

Robin's been playing one love song after another. Everybody's quiet. Thinking about their own private worlds.

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED:

83

SAVANNAH

Why do they make these damn songs to make you think and believe and dream that you can feel like this? Somebody had to go through this shit in order to write it, don't you think?

Nobody really hears this. Savannah crawls over by Bernie and rests her head in her lap...

SAVANNAH

You know what we all have in common?
None of us have a man.

She looks up and sees that Bernadine's not paying her any mind.

BERNADINE

That lying asshole fucked up my life. I should call him right now.

And she tries to leap for the phone...

GLORIA

Are you crazy, girl!

BERNADINE

Well let's call that white bitch!

And Bernie begins punching in the numbers, too slow for Robin.

ROBIN

Hand me the phone. I'll call the 'ho.

Ringin'.

KATHLEEN (O.S.)

John? Is that you? I can't hear you?

And Robin hangs up.

ROBIN

No it's not John, bitch!

BERNADINE

What happened? Give me the damn phone. I wanna get some shit off my chest once and for all. If she thinks she can just take my husband...

Starts dialing the phone angrily. Gloria looks at Savannah. This is not a healthy thing for Bernie to be doing...

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED: (2)

83

KATHLEEN
(coyly, o.s.)
Johnny, you're late. You want me to
start without you...?

Bernie just stares into space. Immobilized.

KATHLEEN (O.S.)
Johnny?

Gloria pulls the phone plug out of the wall.

GLORIA
This is childish and stupid.

SAVANNAH
Thank you.

Bernie stays with private thought for a beat...

BERNADINE
Hell, where's the music? I thought this
was a party.

DISSOLVE TO:

84 INT. GLORIA'S HOUSE - LATER

84

They're sloppy drunk, limp, heads down, shoes off, leaning on
each other and furniture for support. Albums are in various
piles. Pizza slices on the floor. Cake untouched. Presents

opened, wrapping paper scattered. Five empty bottles of
champagne. Robin struggles and is proud when she gets a
Smokey Robinson album on.

Staring at her toes.

SAVANNAH
I'm so sicka this shit. The one man I
love is married with a kid. I mean,
there's my life in one sad little...

BERNADINE
Men do leave their wives.

ROBIN
At least he told you he was married.

SAVANNAH
I'm not your average 24-year old white
girl who's willing to sneak around and
count the days. Why am I 33 years old
and still single? Hell, I'm smart. And
I still look good.

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED:

84

She looks at everybody...

SAVANNAH
And I still look good.
(beat)
I'm waiting.

ROBIN, BERNADINE AND GLORIA
(overlapping
sarcastically)
Freak.
Hoochie.
Flygirl.
A true Diva.

Savannah smiles. You guys go straight to hell.

SAVANNAH
What ever happened to the good old days?

GLORIA
What good old days?

SAVANNAH
When men actually flirted and even spoke
to you and then asked you out on a real
date. Where the hell are they hiding?

Well hell. That's a good question. They each give it some
thought. Each one in the slurring stage. Words come
deliberately, slowly...

ROBIN
They're not hiding. They're too damn
scared to make a commitment.

BERNADINE
They're with white women.

GLORIA
Or gay.

SAVANNAH
Or married.

They look at each other. There's more, isn't there? Hell
yes. Then they begin to YELL, and blurt out in rapid fire.

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED: (2)

84

SAVANNAH, BERNADINE, GLORIA AND ROBIN
 (overlapping)
 They're ugly.
 Dumb as hell.
 Unemployed.
 Crackheads.
 Short. And with Napoleonic complexes.
 Chronic liars. Don't know what the truth is.
 Dogs. Get it from anybody anyway they can.
 Behind bars.
 Got bad credit if they've ever had any at all.
 Bor-ing.
 Can't fuck or they've got little dicks.
 Got big dicks and still can't fuck.
 Too possessive.
 Want you to be their mother.
 Ugly.

SAVANNAH
 Okay. Stop! And we already said ugly.

ROBIN
 Well shit. You asked.

Just grinning at each other now. Comfortable in silence.
 Smokey croons on.

85 INT. GLORIA'S HOUSE - LATER

85

When Tarik comes through the front door, he can't believe his eyes. The women are unconscious, snoring. Smokey's "Tracks of My Tears" is loud. He steps over the women and when he sees Gloria stretched across a sheet of album covers, her dress pulled up to cover her arms, he smiles, then shakes his head, goes to the closet and brings back blankets for them all.

TARIK
 Happy Birthday, Ma.

...and places the blanket over her first. Smokey finally fades.

86 EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

86

Savannah is having a hard time getting her Celica into a parking space in front of the baggage claim area. When the automatic doors pop open, she sees Kenneth reaching for his garment bag. She quickly reaches into her purse, takes out a small vial, sticks out her tongue and squirts out enough drops to last a lifetime. Peeks at herself in the mirror. Blots her red lipstick on an old napkin, and is just about to

(CONTINUED)

86 CONTINUED:

86

get out of the car when a police officer shakes his head, informing her that she's parked illegally and gestures for her to move it. When she looks toward the open doors, Kenneth is walking through them.

87 INT. SAVANNAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

87

Kenneth and Savannah are making sweltering love. The HOTTEST we've seen. As they wind down, he caresses her in such a way that shows he cherishes her. Looks into her eyes deeply. He loves her. It's all so heart-rending for Savannah, but she cups his face, kisses him slowly until they are simply holding each other.

Kenneth falls asleep. Savannah stares at his body. The ceiling. What am I doing? Eases out of bed over to the phone, drags it into her bathroom.

A88 INT. SAVANNAH'S BATHROOM

A88

Savannah closes the door, sits on toilet lid. Dials.

SAVANNAH

(hushed tone)

Hi Mama. Hope I didn't wake you?

INTERCUT TO:

88 INT. MAMA'S BEDROOM

88

Mama's in bed, under tons of worn out blankets, mismatched pillowcases. Old color TV, volume turned low. Six sponge rollers in.

MAMA

What difference do it make? I'm up now.
What's wrong? Why you talking so low?

Gnawing on her bottom lip. Wants to say something. Looks scared. Contemplating hard.

MAMA (O.S.)

Savannah? You still there?

Snaps out of it.

SAVANNAH

Yep. I'm here. Nothing's wrong. How are things with you, Mama?

Sits up. Peels off one blanket.

MAMA

Well, they cut my food stamps to fifty-seven dollars a month.

(CONTINUED)

88 CONTINUED:

88

SAVANNAH

How've you been getting by? What the hell've you been eating?

Clearly embarrassed.

MAMA

See. I knew you'd be upset. I been trying to deal with this on my own, but my check go so fast and everything is so high nowadays. It's already been in the 30's and the next place I move to won't be all electric.

This is not the answer she wanted. Savannah is trying her damndest not to cry.

SAVANNAH

How much money do you have?

MAMA (O.S.)

Eighteen dollars.

This tears her up.

SAVANNAH

Mama. Be down at Western Union first thing in the morning.

See Mama relax into pillows now. That's my baby. Now let's talk about you.

MAMA

(tickled)

Kenneth told me he was trying to get back out your way since he's filing for his divorce and all...

Hearing his name, her face changes. A different pain, now, bittersweet. She looks toward the door. Takes a breath.

MAMA (O.S.)

He didn't call you?

SAVANNAH

No.

Why did I say that?

MAMA (O.S.)

Well, why don't you pick up that damn phone and...

SAVANNAH

I don't know, Mama, I just...

(CONTINUED)

88 CONTINUED: (2)

88

Has to stop here. Because suddenly, she's at the edge of losing it. Softer now.

SAVANNAH

I just don't know if...I trust him.
Y'know?

Silence. Savannah biting her lip. At Mama's end, she can sense her daughter's pain. Uncharacteristically tender with...

MAMA

Girl, you crazy.

SAVANNAH

Mama, will you do me a favor? I don't care if it's a knitting class, or a new girdle, or...

BOTH start to cry. Stop it. She'll hear you.

SAVANNAH

...you need. Anything. You pick up the damn phone.

(beat)

And you call me.

MAMA

(o.s.; childlike))

All right, baby.

SAVANNAH

Only me.

And she kisses the mouthpiece so loud her mother feels it.

89 INT. ROBIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

89

Robin's in a sleazy Frederick's of Hollywood-type purple lace teddy, standing in front of the mirror, trying to figure out if she looks sexy enough. Her pug dog, Chester, is stretched out on her bed, watching her.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

I'm so glad Russell's back.

(beat)

He's been gone three months.

Pushing her breasts up for more cleavage. Smirks.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

Well. He's not all the way back. Most of his stuff is still over at his other house but it's been kind of hard for him to get it since she changed the locks.

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED:

89

I can do better than this. Pulls a variety of trashy lingerie from the dresser. Chooses red this time. Holds it up. Slits galore.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

Talk about nerve? That slut dialed my number and swore she was cussing me out.

Slithering into the thing, but gets tangled. Frowning as she imitates Carolyn's voice...

ROBIN

'You're one dizzy, hard-up bitch. How could you let him back in your house let alone your bed, knowing he walked out on you and came running over here to me?'

Checks out her profile in the mirror. Sucks in tummy, slides hands over hips.

ROBIN

'But you know what? You can have the sorry motherfucker 'cause I don't want him. You just better pray he don't give you herpes like he did me.'

This works. What do you think Chester? He's sprawled out, asleep.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

That herpes part was just a scare tactic. That much I know. She must be an Aries because they're totally into revenge.

Looks into her own eyes in the mirror.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

I know Bernie and Savannah are probably talking about me like a dog, but I don't care.

She's finally captured the look. Begins rehearsing how she'll swirl around when he gets here...

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)

I mean Russell literally begged me to give him another chance. He sounded so pitiful, I couldn't help but give in. He said he had made the biggest mistake of his life...

Now she's smiling at her image...

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED: (2)

89

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)
You get the best loving in the world when
a man is begging.

(beat)
I mean, he had 100 other places he
could've gone. But he came here. To me.

Lifts Chester from the bed, holding him away from her
nightie, and puts him in his basket in the bathroom and
closes the door. Looks at her watch. Then removes it. Sets
it next to one of her dolls.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)
I wish he'd hurry up. I guess I'm just
a little anxious because he's over there
negotiating with her about how they can
end this stupid marriage without a
lawyer.

Now practices sitting in a photographic pose on edge of bed,
leans back crosses her legs as if the door will open any
minute. Hold on this moment.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)
I'm just glad he was honest and told me
where he was going. It shows me that
he's finally maturing.

The dog whimpers. She gets up and heads for the bathroom...

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)
All I can say is. It's about time.

90 INT./EXT. GLORIA'S GARAGE - SAME NIGHT

90

Marvin closes the hood of Gloria's Volvo. He's just finished
changing her oil. His big toolbox sits open on the floor.
He's been busy. Gloria sits on a stool, holding a Pepsi.

GLORIA
I know it'll broaden his horizon and make
him more worldly. And he'll be fluent in
Spanish and all...

She takes a swig. Eyeing her friend's neutral profile as he
works. She seems to care a lot about what he thinks.

GLORIA
...I just don't see why he has to run all
the way to Spain when he's already been
accepted to Arizona State.

Marvin's wiping his hands on a rag. Doesn't look at her.

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED:

90

MARVIN
I'm gonna miss him too.

GLORIA
Who's talking about missing him?

Now he turns and faces her.

MARVIN
He's acting like a man. Who knows what he wants. Be proud you raised him to be that way.

GLORIA
I am proud. He's just...my baby.
(beat)
Do you understand?

Marvin picks up his toolbox.

MARVIN
(softly)
Yes. I understand.
(beat)
Why are you telling me all this.?

Gloria repositions herself on the stool. She's not used to asking for advice or help...

GLORIA
Well, you know these last few months since you've been coming over and showing him how to fix things and he's never known what having a father is like and since you took him on that fishing trip, he looks up to you...

Marvin knows what she's getting at. But just now, he looks more strong than soft. He's not about to be her fall guy.

GLORIA
...I just figured that maybe you could get him to come to his senses.

Straight to her eyes...

MARVIN
Seems like Tarik isn't the one who needs to come to his senses. If you don't mind my saying so.

Gloria looks like she's been harpooned. No one is on my side. I thought you cared about me and my son.

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED: (2)

90

GLORIA

Well, everybody is entitled to their own opinion.

He sees his honesty has made her defensive.

MARVIN

Well, it's getting late and I better get on home...

Gloria just nods. Marvin doesn't want to leave it like this, and walks over and gives her a tender kiss on the cheek. He looks her in the eye, not apologizing, but hoping he hasn't offended her. He steps backwards and turns and walks away. THIS time Gloria sits there and watches him cross the street until he disappears behind his front door.

91 INT. ROBIN'S BEDROOM - SAME NIGHT

91

Robin's lost her sexy zeal and is now speed changing channels with the remote. She's pissed. He's been gone too long. When the TV screen flashes "Unsolved Mysteries", Robin can't stand the irony. We hear the door open, quietly. When she looks up Russell is standing there. We realize now we have never seen him before. He actually is one of the five best-looking guys in North America. And worthless, we can see that from here.

ROBIN

Russell, what took you so long?

Without stopping, he heads for the bathroom.

RUSSELL

I wasn't gone that long.

She gets up and follows him.

ROBIN

Well, what happened?

He begins to undress.

RUSSELL

We talked.

Don't bullshit me. Not tonight.

ROBIN

I assumed that much. Is she gonna sign the divorce papers or what?

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

91

RUSSELL

We talked about it. But you don't just decide to divorce somebody and they sign on the dotted line. It's not that simple.

He's down to his briefs.

RUSSELL

Where are my pajamas?

He starts opening all the drawers. She's irritated by his dismissiveness.

ROBIN

First time you ever asked for those.

He finds his pajama bottoms, begins slipping them on...

RUSSELL

I can't take coming in here being pressured about what I'm doing with my own wife.

She's hurt and more. Clearly frightened by his indifference.

ROBIN

Well it may be a long time before we have a chance to be together because I'm going to spend some time with my mother in Tucson for a while.

RUSSELL

Good. I'll feed your dog and water the plants.

And he climbs into bed, with his back to her, turns off his lamp. Robin just looks at him because she doesn't know what to do now. The phone rings. She answers it.

TROY (O.S.)

What's happening baby?

ROBIN

(low low voice)

I can't talk now

TROY (O.S.)

Well, say something sexy so I can go to sleep.

And she hangs up the phone. Russell rolls over and looks at her like she's scum.

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED: (2)

91

RUSSELL
And who was that?

ROBIN
Savannah.

He rolls back over.

RUSSELL
I suggest you tell your boyfriends not to
call here after eleven.

She actually forces up a smile.

ROBIN (VOICE OVER)
He's jealous. That's a good sign. A
real good sign.

92 EXT. BERNADINE'S DRIVEWAY - EVENING

92

Bernie hears a car pull up, goes to the doorway to greet the kids, and sees Kathleen behind the wheel of John's black BMW. The sky's moving. Full of thick, dark-gray cumulous clouds, rising like smoke from a huge fire. Bernie hurries. This is her chance to cuss this bitch out and heads towards the car. Kathleen looks scared and we can SEE her scurrying to get the kids out, but...

CUT TO:

93 INT./EXT. THE CAR

93

Onika has spilled M&M's all over the floor and is picking them up one by one.

KATHLEEN
Don't worry about those sweetheart. I'll
get you a giant bag next weekend.

ONIKA
No! I want these. And Daddy'll get mad
at me for making a mess.

John Jr. is already opening his door, pulling his sister by the arm...

JOHN JR.
She said forget it. So let her pick 'em
up. Now come on. Move it!

Kathleen waves good-bye, and when she turns around, Bernie is standing at her window. Kathleen looks terrified, but doesn't move. Can't.

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED:

93

KATHLEEN

(nervously)

I'm sorry. I know this makes you uncomfortable. And me too. But John had to fly to Los Angeles unexpectedly and...

BERNADINE

...he needed you to pack something quick, he'll call you as soon as he gets there because he's not sure how exactly many days he'll have to be gone.

How did you know that?

KATHLEEN

Yeah.

Bernie shakes her head back and forth. You poor thing. Her anger has now been replaced by empathy because she's been here. She reaches inside and turns off the ignition. Kathleen knows she could stop her, but doesn't. Okay. Let's get this over with. It's been a long time coming.

BERNADINE

(sincerely)

For your sake, I hope he's changed. But the last two times he told me that shit, what he was really doing was...

...no need to finish. Kathleen is at first embarrassed and then meek. She knows Bernadine knows him.

BERNADINE

Look. Why don't you come on in for a minute.

(beat)

It's safe.

CUT TO:

94 INT. THE HOUSE

94

Kids are playing in their rooms. Kathleen sits at the kitchen table, a bit baffled that she's actually inside this house with this woman. Bernie sets two glasses down, fills hers with booze, the other with Ginger ale. Sits across from Kathleen.

KATHLEEN

(nervously; looking around)

I took the kids for pizza.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED:

94

KATHLEEN (Cont'd)

(beat)

Your home is really beautiful. John said
you had great taste.

(beat)

He was right.

She takes a sip from her drink. Still awfully tense.

BERNADINE

You love my husband, don't you?

KATHLEEN

Yes.

BERNADINE

Well, I can't make any guarantees, but
after being with this man for eleven
years, if you really want to hold onto
him, there's some things you should do.
And a whole lot you shouldn't...

Kathleen is listening intently.

BERNADINE

Let's start with the underwear...

DISSOLVE TO:

95 INT. THE HOUSE - LATER

95

They're both laughing. We CAN SEE they've had dinner
together. Bernie's removing the plates, refuses to let
Kathleen help.

KATHLEEN

We hardly get much time together and I
was thinking, maybe I could play golf,
too...

BERNADINE

...yeah, 'play golf.' Bullshit. He
never even learned. That's just how he
sneaks off.

Kathleen is "writing" this all down mentally. Helps Bernie
anyway.

BERNADINE

...and I don't like when you said you
pick the suit he's gonna wear the night
before. And recap the damn news because
he's too busy to watch it. You sound
like me, girl. And you couldn't make a
worse mistake than that.

(CONTINUED)

95 CONTINUED:

95

It does sound stupid to Kathleen once she hears it put like this.

KATHLEEN

I just want this to work so bad, but I don't want to be pathetic.

BERNADINE

Shit. You want pathetic? I kept a daily record of what suit he wore with what tie so he wouldn't look redundant.

And they both smile at this. It becomes a look that holds in silence.

CUT TO:

96 EXT. THE HOUSE - MUCH LATER

96

They're standing at the car, and Bernie gives Kathleen a hug, which startles her because Kathleen hardly expected it. She's also grateful for it. For this entire evening. She gets in the car and Bernie leans down to the window...

BERNADINE

Let me ask you something. Do you want to be a bookkeeper forever?

Funny you should ask. Feels safe in telling her.

KATHLEEN

Not really. I want to go to law school after the baby's born and I scored hi...

BERNADINE

I'll leave you with this, don't let him stop you. He'll try to. But you just say you're going...in as soft and non-threatening voice as you've got.

(beat)

And then. Go do it.

...And she steps away from the car. Kathleen smiles, as she backs the car out of the driveway.

BERNADINE

(yelling)

OPEN EVERY PIECE OF MAIL THAT COMES IN THAT HOUSE!!

Bernie stands there and waves. Better you than me, girl.

97 INT. BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

97

Gloria and Tarik sit in a crowded church. The 100 member-choir is singing a soaring HYMNAL that has much of the congregation in tears, clapping, Amening and stomping their feet. The choir drops to a hushed tone as ushers walk up the isle with collection plates and begin to pass them down each pew.

From the pulpit the MINISTER begins the announcements for the sick and shut-in. Without looking at him, Gloria leans to whisper to her son...

GLORIA

This Up With People's choir that's going to Spain...do they sound this good?

Tarik glances at his Mama's profile.

TARIK

You mean the one you won't let me join?
No. But they're pretty close.

Oh. Gloria says nothing. He's eyeing his Mama now, something's up. Drops five dollar bill into the brass plate. Pass it on.

From the pulpit, the Preacher leans into his microphone and over the sweet tone of the choir's melody...

MINISTER

...and our prayers go out to Sister Lula Mae Preston, who just had hip surgery. She's in Mt. Bethel Presbyterian Hospital.

Amens. Praise the Lords.

MINISTER

Sister Gloria Matthews would like the congregation to send their prayers out for the safe journey of her son Tarik, who'll soon be on his way to Spain for a year to play the saxophone with the Up With People International Orchestra. God'll be right there with you, son.

Tarik is completely stunned, and without looking at him, Gloria reaches over and takes his hand. Squeezes it.

98 INT. BERNADINE'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

98

It's raining bullets. Yellow and purple lightning. An Arizona MONSOON. Bernie's in bed, asleep, with a cold.

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED:

98

Ceiling fan spins slowly. Piles of balled up tissue, magazines. Aretha serenades softly. A perfect day to be sick and pitiful...

John Jr. tiptoes in, carrying a cup of hot tea, spilling some, and sets it on her night table. He doesn't wake her. Leaves. As the smell of tea rouses her, in comes Onika holding something behind her back. Bernie coughs and sits up...

ONIKA

Guess what I got?

BERNADINE

The newspaper?

Onika shakes her head no.

BERNADINE

Another picture you drew for me?

Shakes her head no again, only faster. Bernie's trying hard not to show her impatience.

ONIKA

Some are white and some are brown.

BERNADINE

I give, baby.

Onika flings her arms around in front of her, all the envelopes from the day's mail fly across the floor. She's so sorry. Picks them up, hands them to Bernie, who starts sorting through them, tossing a bill or two on the floor, only to find an envelope marked "The Ritz Carlton." She looks puzzled. Why would they be writing me?

ONIKA

Mama...?

Bernie opens it. Inside is another letter. From James. She begins to read...

JAMES (O.S.)

I've waited as long as I could to contact you, and since you never gave me your address...

ONIKA

Mama. Is freak a bad word?

JAMES (O.S.)

I've been thinking about you, Bernie. A lot. Everyday, all the time.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED: (2)

98

JAMES (Cont'd)
I'm embarrassed even to write that down,
but it's true.

Onika's rambling through her mother's jewelry. Puts on a necklace. (Bernie will not take her eyes off this letter until she's finished.)

JAMES (O.S.)
I fell in love. In one night.

ONIKA
Mama, I asked you a question!

BERNADINE
No. Freak is not a bad word.

Onika doesn't notice the catch in her mother's voice. Too busy trying on earrings.

JAMES (O.S.)
What's even harder for me to understand,
is that what I feel for you has never
undercut the love I have for my wife.
How is that possible?

ONIKA
Tabatha said it was a bad word.

Hey, four necklaces look even better than just one!

JAMES (O.S.)
I watch her everyday. So beautiful and
so brave. I just want to give her
everything I've got in me. Every moment.

Bernie begins to cry quietly. Shakes her head. Now Onika's found the lipstick. Red to boot.

BERNADINE
It's not really a nice word.

JAMES (O.S.)
She's hanging on, fighting to be here for
me. And when she sleeps, I cry. Over
how amazing she is, and how lucky I've
been to have her in my life.

Onika, now with red lips and pounds of jewelry, hops up on the bed next to Bernie, whose head is still facing downward, tears falling onto the letter. She moves it out further.

ONIKA
Can I say it?

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED: (3)

98

BERNADINE
(whispers)

No.

JAMES (O.S.)
You're the only person in this world I
ever knew that I could tell this to.

Now the tears are rolling down Bernie's cheeks. This letter
is breaking her heart.

JAMES (O.S.)
And even if this never finds you. And we
never speak again. You've changed my
life.

ONIKA
Mama?

JAMES (O.S.)
You know what inspiration is? It's
someone who lets you know life will go
on. And something beautiful can be
waiting somewhere. When you least expect
it.

ONIKA
What does it mean?

BERNADINE
What does what mean?

ONIKA
Freak.

Bernie folds the letter delicately.

BERNADINE
It means weird.

ONIKA
You let me say weird so why can't I say
freak?

BERNADINE
Because.

And finally...

ONIKA
Mama, why are you crying?

Bernie lifts the comforter and Onika slides under, gets a
tissue and wipes her mother's eyes. They cuddle.

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED: (4)

98

BERNADINE
Because I feel good.

Onika looks out the window. It's not raining anymore.

ONIKA
(sing-songish)
God stopped crying.

Bernie smiles, gracefully.

BERNADINE
I don't think those were God's tears at
all. They're just His way of making sure
everything keeps growing.

99 EXT. TUCSON PARK - DAY

99

Robin's walking next to her mother through the park. Looks troubled, although her mother doesn't notice. When they come upon a shady bench, they sit down. People with children and dogs are throwing frisbees; picnicking, and sunbathing. Robin follows their movements. Still looking uneasy. Not taking her eyes off them and her mother doesn't take her eyes off the path they took to get here. It's as if she's uneasy without Dad near. Robin presses both hands on her knees, hunches her shoulders, rocks back and forth a few times and finally blurts out something. Whatever she says startles her mother so much it causes her to freeze. She turns to face her daughter, who is staring back. Strong and frightened at once. Her mother sits beside her, and takes up her hands, holds them tight.

100 EXT. MARVIN'S HOUSE - EVENING

100

Gloria looks nervous as she knocks on Marvin's front door. It's RAINING again but she doesn't seem to mind.

MARVIN (O.S.)
It's open.

She enters.

101 INT. MARVIN'S HOUSE - EVENING

101

He's refinishing an old chair in the middle of the room. Gloria's admiring it. And him. From outside, we hear THUNDER.

GLORIA
How you been doing? Haven't seen much of
you lately.

He's sanding away. Doesn't look up at her.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED:

101

MARVIN
Been a little busy.

She wants to sit down, but he's not acting like he wants her to...

GLORIA
I think I know why.
(beat)
I acted silly when all you did was tell me the truth.
(beat)
I guess I didn't want to hear it.

Marvin doesn't look up. Keeps working. Gloria takes a deep breath. This is hard for her.

GLORIA
I came over for two reasons. I know I shut you out. And I miss you in my life. Our life.
(breath)
There's no doubt in my mind that you were right. And I apologize.

Now Marvin finally looks up. Stops sanding. He nods toward the sofa.

MARVIN
(softly)
Come on and sit down.

She does. Slowly. The rain seems to have stopped.

GLORIA
He's been the man in my life.

Marvin already knows this. But his eyes are so intent. She looks down. Somehow, her breath is coming faster now. CLOSE on her...

GLORIA
...I gave up the dream of having someone for myself a long time ago. It was a terrible thing for me to do to Tarik...

When she looks up. He is sitting next to her. A quiet storm.

GLORIA
...I'm grateful to you. For opening my eyes.

He's not smiling. Why isn't he smiling? What's he thinking? Her breath even faster. Jesus.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED: (2)

101

GLORIA

...for not allowing my fears of being lonely to deny Tarik a chance to grow up and do what he wants to. I was so unfair.

Marvin is putting his arm around her shoulder, comforting her...

MARVIN

You were being unfair to you.

Do you understand?

MARVIN

You've made yourself believe that you're not worthy of somebody wanting to love you...

Gloria is embarrassed and her eyes are getting cloudy because this is the truth she's denied for so long. And now here's this man telling her.

MARVIN

...I won't let you do that. Anymore.

And now she's crying and Marvin bends over and kisses her tears. He puts his arms around her, holds her, and then kisses her. A kiss that is so long and deep we CAN SEE it penetrating their souls, not just their lips. Gloria is so aroused that she begins caressing his neck and head and shoulders, and

begins to remove Marvin's shirt. He is kissing her all over and then stops to look at her. They smile deeply at each other and finally begin to make love. Which is what they've found. Purple and orange lightning crackles and illuminates the entire sky outside. The thunder rumbles low but the rain is vicious. Beats against the window behind them as if it's trying to get in.

102 EXT. "RAGING WATERS"-LIKE PARK - DAY

102

Robin and Savannah are here with John Jr. and Onika, having a great time as they go down the various water slides with them...

...LATER...the kids are in a GIANT WAVE-MAKING pool, as Savannah and Robin sit on a blanket of the fake beach, keeping an eye on them...

SAVANNAH

So what do you think?

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED:

102

Puts her lemonade in the sand and turns to Savannah. She's grateful Savannah even wants her opinion. Listens as she's deciding how to best get this through Savannah's defenses.

SAVANNAH

...I've loved this man forever. And now that we've got another chance, I don't want to blow it by not having any faith in him. You know what I mean?

On the word "faith" Robin sips her lemonade. Waves to Onika. Stares out at the waves forming.

ROBIN

Well, you hear this shit on Oprah and Sally everyday...

Savannah nods, yes you do.

SAVANNAH

That where you get your advice, off the TV?

ROBIN

This one woman was in your same situation? This man kept saying he was going to leave too. She got her hopes all up and everything. Quit her job and moved to the same city he lived in.

Savannah digs her feet underneath the sand.

SAVANNAH

So what happened?

Robin turns away.

ROBIN

...I'm trying to tell you. Anyway this guy was a total jerk. He had plenty of cash. Used to getting everything he wanted. He promised to pay her rent until she found a new job...

Savannah's listening intently.

ROBIN

...right after she got there, found out she was three months pregnant. He was happy for about a week and then he said this was putting him in a tough position...

Robin's very quiet. Thinking about that. Apparently, it left quite an impression.

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED: (2)

102

ROBIN

...to make a long story short he ended up dumping the woman because he said his kids would be too hurt if he left now.

SAVANNAH

So what about the baby?

ROBIN

She had an abortion. And never told a soul. Not even her own Mama.

Shallow breath.

ROBIN

And she never looked at men quite the same again.

Those words sober Savannah a little.

SAVANNAH

So, what, in the end he left his wife after all?

Robin looks Savannah deep in her eyes.

ROBIN

Take a wild guess, Savannah.

And Robin leans back on her palms. She's done.

SAVANNAH

What show'd you hear this on?

Not so fast.

ROBIN

Sorry. I've never been on Oprah.

Oh. Now Savannah leans back on her palms like Robin's doing. Looks out at the waves. Robin continues to stare straight ahead when she feels Savannah turn to look at her. Real quiet.

103 INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

103

Savannah's waiting in an ornate lobby. She's really wired. Looks at her watch and gets up. Walks through the lobby to the bar. We SEE it's the Ritz Carlton, the same bar where Bernie met James! She orders another drink. Still nursing the one she has.

104 INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT (LATER)

104

...at a table in a corner. Her second drink is almost finished. She's watching the door. Finally, Kenneth enters, spots her...

KENNETH

Sorry I'm late. My daughter's had a 104 fever off and on for two days. Turns out she's got chicken pox...

...as he bends down to kiss Savannah, she deliberately lifts her drink to her mouth to prevent it. Kenneth sits down, somewhat unaffected.

KENNETH

I mean Paula's been beeping me every hour all damn day. I told her all she needed to do was give the girl an ice bath or rub her down with alcohol. Jesus. You'd think the kid had Malaria.

Quietly...

SAVANNAH

So why'd you even come?

KENNETH

Because this...you...are the most important thing in my life.

She sips her drink. Her silence is making him a little uneasy. So he calls to the waiter.

KENNETH

I'll have a gin and tonic, please.

When he looks back, he tries a conspiratorial smile...

KENNETH

I mean, some day she won't have me around to bug about this shit.

Ah.

SAVANNAH

You mean the divorce. I guess the paperwork is all filed by now, hmmn?

He doesn't know what's with her, but he knows this is the tricky part. He clears his throat. His smile becomes softer, intimate.

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED:

104

KENNETH

You know, each trip out here, I dread going home. The longer I think about it, the more I'm convinced that I want to do this. When the time is right.

When the time is right. The waiter sets down his drink.

KENNETH

It's more financial than anything. Quite a few things have to be worked out.

She nods. That sounds reasonable.

KENNETH

...if I left right now, I know it would be the wrong time for my daughter. She thinks we're having another baby, and I have to prepare her for this. Hell, she's only six...

SAVANNAH

...and we know all the shit they can bug you with at that age. Getting sick. Wanting babies...

He wonders how she means that. But she is smiling. He tries putting his hand over hers, and she lets him.

KENNETH

(sighing)

...so. Looks like we're gonna have to wait just a little longer than I'd hoped. But knowing the kind of person you are, I'm sure you want to do the right thing. As much as I do.

Savannah squeezes his fingers gently.

SAVANNAH

Actually. I want to. A little more than you do.

Holding his hands. Looking into his eyes.

SAVANNAH

And you know, the longer I think about it. The more you look like the scum. Of the fucking earth.

And she takes her hand away.

SAVANNAH

See, the good news is that I was never in danger of your ever getting a divorce.

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED: (2)

104

He just stares. Dumbstruck.

SAVANNAH

No. I'm the lucky bitch who's the most important thing in your life. Meaning, you'll abandon your wife and your baby to get laid every chance I give you.

She sips her drink.

SAVANNAH

And you think the brass ring is some bogus promise to put me in Paula's shoes, so next year you can do the same fucking thing to me. Well, that's pretty close to irresistible, loverman.

Now. He's angry.

KENNETH

You bitches must all work for the same firm. You weren't feeling this self-righteous when you were fucking my brains out. You weren't so concerned about my poor little wife then, were you?

She looks him dead in the eye.

SAVANNAH

You know you're right. I couldn't see past what I wanted. And that made me an asshole.

...and she gets up.

SAVANNAH

Only difference between you and me is...
(softly)
I'm not anymore.

KENNETH

Wait a minute. Look. I'm sorry, Savannah. We need to talk about this some more. Without the anger. I'm not mad. Really.

How nice.

SAVANNAH

...and to prove it. The drinks are on you.

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED: (3)

104

...and she turns the table OVER, cocktails, flower vase, nut mixture, burning candle all FLYING into his lap. She pivots, with an incredible amount of dignity and walks out of the bar real slow. Everyone in the bar is watching her. Let 'em watch.

105 INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE - DAY

105

Savannah's standing in the middle of a hyperactive TV set, MOVEMENT all around her. She's fervently scribbling on a script, hurriedly glancing up, keeping one eye on the crew. She's in charge here. The place is BUZZING: stagehands moving equipment, furniture, lights, sound checking, LOUD hammering...

...A young intern in typical Generation X get-up hands Savannah a mobile phone. She brushes him off. But he insists. She takes it, covers her ear to hear better...

MAMA (O.S.)
HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?

SAVANNAH
Ma...?

MAMA (O.S.)
Kenneth just called and told me how simple you're acting...

Oh.

MAMA (O.S.)
He was actually crying and men don't cry over no woman unless they love 'em. How could you be so insensitive?

Savannah steadies herself. This one's a long time coming...

SAVANNAH
First of all, I'm sick of you telling me how I should live my life. Who you think I should love. Marry. Sick of it!

MAMA (O.S.)
Don't raise your voice at me.

Walking again. Trying to control her tone now...

SAVANNAH
Ma, I'm thirty three years old. And I live alone.

MAMA (O.S.)
Tell me about it.

(CONTINUED)

105 CONTINUED:

105

SAVANNAH

...and I have to accept the fact that I may live alone for the rest of my li...

MAMA (O.S.)

...it ain't too late! He's begging on his damn knees, and you letting him get away.

She stops once more. Going to take one stab at saying it real.

SAVANNAH

Don't you hear me, Ma? I have a job, and friends, and interests you don't even ask about. Because only one thing counts with y...

MAMA (O.S.)

...with any damn woman, if they ain't lying to themselves!

SAVANNAH

Well, I'm being honest with myself, Ma. I'm smart. I work hard. And I have a good heart. And if I let myself think like you do, I'm a dead woman. You should be proud I'd rather be on my own than crawl after a two-timing loser li...

MAMA (O.S.)

...he's a good man, Savannah. He just in a bad situation and he trying to get out of...

SAVANNAH

Then why don't you fucking marry him!

And she SLAMS down the receiver. Walks around quickly in circles a few times. Stops. Stares at the phone.

106 INT. MAMA'S KITCHEN - PITTSBURGH - DAY

106

Mama's in her tiny kitchen polishing up her old tarnished silverware. The look on her face tells us it's on its way to pawnshop. But just now, she's not polishing anything. Staring at that phone, willing it to ring...

...and it does. She SNATCHES up the receiver. Waits.

SAVANNAH (O.S.)

I was wrong to yell.

Mama's eyes close. A call from God Himself wouldn't be more welcome.

(CONTINUED)

106 CONTINUED:

106

SAVANNAH (O.S.)

I meant what I said about my life, but I am sorry for disrespecting you, and I won't ever again.

MAMA

(softly)

It's all right, baby. I just don't want to see you end up like me. Alone.

Touched.

SAVANNAH (O.S.)

I love you, Mama.

(beat)

And I'm real glad I called you back.

107 OMITTED

107

107A INT. COURTROOM - CLOSE ON JUDGE - (FORMERLY SCENE 114) 107A
DAY

The same judge we saw at preliminary hearing. He's flipping through the file, reviewing his notes. Taking his time, clicking his pen open and shut, open and shut, until he is reminded that he knows his decision already. He then leans back, closes the file, and clears his throat. Suddenly, our SOUND FADES. The scene goes to M.O.S.,

as we SNAP TO...

REVERSE ANGLE FROM BEHIND THE JUDGE

We SEE John sitting with his lawyer, wearing one of his \$2,000 Armani suits. He's looking directly at, but respectfully into the Judge's eyes. Bernie sits next to her lawyer. Savannah is directly behind them. Bernie looks as if she's about to throw up...

...and as the Judge's body movement suggest he's talking, we SEE John and Bernie's expression SIMULTANEOUSLY change from puzzlement to astonishment -- can't believe what they're hearing...

...and then both of their jaws drop open, but this time John's in complete HORROR and Bernie's in unbelievable DELIGHT! Savannah's on her feet squeezing Bernie's shoulders, while all Bernie can do is cover her mouth...

108 EXT. GLORIA'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

108

Gloria is standing by the pool in her bathrobe. We HEAR a series of EXPLOSIONS and then the fourth of July fireworks illuminate the sky. Gloria smiles at them. She removes her robe. Bathing suit is snug. Snaps thigh seams to get more

(CONTINUED)

108 CONTINUED:

108

comfortable. A kaleidoscope of colors from the fireworks reflect into the pool. Gloria sets glass of ice tea on edge of shallow end of pool. Walks down steps slowly. Water is cold. Takes a few seconds to adjust to it. Pushes off. Does a lap. At deep end. Rolls over. Fireworks are beautiful. Begins butterfly stroke...

Stops. Her head SNAPS around, arms REACH up. GRABBING at her chest...

GLORIA

TARIK!...

...and Gloria goes under and comes up again. Her voice isn't as strong now...

GLORIA

Tarik! Help!

...back under for what appears to be ten seconds. Doesn't come back up. The water is calm. We SEE reflection of the fireworks fade "into" the pool, as we...

...hear a door SLAM, and...

TARIK (O.S.)

MAMA...!

...his fully-clothed body FLASHES past the CAMERA, PLUNGES into the water, disappears. The water is calm again. HOLD on that stillness.

109 EXT. TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

109

Robin's ringing the doorbell of a residence we've not seen before. Appears impatient. Rings it again and again and again.

CUT TO:

110 INT. TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

110

Russell kicked back, watching football game. He's annoyed as hell. Answers the door with his beer. His mouth drops open when he sees Robin. He's pretty-much paralyzed, really.

ROBIN

I just want you to know that I'm carrying your baby. And I'm keeping it.

He's caught like a deer in headlights. She can watch his pathetic mind working. Trying to stay cool.

(CONTINUED)

110 CONTINUED:

110

RUSSELL

Really? And what makes you think it's mine?

But she just stands there, strong, staring him in the eye. He takes a sip of beer.

RUSSELL

Well, what do you want me to do about it?

ROBIN

You can do whatever the fuck you want to do as long as you stay out of my life!

RUSSELL

What exactly do you think I've been trying to do?

ROBIN

You've sure got a pathological way of showing it.

When his eyes dart back to the TV, she grabs the beer from his hand and splatters some into his face, then tosses the can into a trash can, turns around to leave.

ROBIN

Last time I looked, the score was 16-0. Pittsburgh.

Damn, that felt good.

111 INT. ROBIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

111

Robin's pushing quite a stack of Victoria Secret boxes with her foot inside her front door. Drops her attache and grocery bag, goes into the kitchen drawer, grabs a MAGIC MARKER and writes RETURN TO SENDER in big bold letters across the boxes. Goes over to the phone. Can see her message light blinking. She ignores it. Dials a number. Her tone is different from what we're used to hearing when she's talking to a man. It's the one she uses with her family. At work. Intelligent. Assured. No-bullshit.

ROBIN

Hello, Michael. This is Robin.

(beat)

I want you to know that I wouldn't blame you if you hung up on me. But I want to apologize for the way I acted, and I want us to try again.

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED:

111

MICHAEL (O.S.)

For what?

She takes a breath. It took a lot to say it. But she said it.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

I'm touched. Really, Robin. But. You hardly need to apologize because you didn't find me appealing.

(beat)

Anyway. Things have changed.

Changed.

ROBIN

(quietly)

Go ahead...

Long pause. He's trying to say this as diplomatically as he can...

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Well. It's been such a long time. And. Me and Gena have gotten to know each other quite well, and one thing led to another... and...well, we're engaged.

Robin sits on the couch. She's actually smiling.

ROBIN

Good for you, Michael. You guys take care of each other. I hope she knows she's getting herself a wonderful man. The best.

Her voice cracked on that. So...

ROBIN

Look. Something's going off in the kitchen. Can I call you later and...

PULL BACK now. She's nodding to his answer. Slowly, now she puts the phone gently in the cradle. Rest her head against the sofa. Then...

...she sees the light blinking on her answering machine. Presses the button. CLICK. WHIRR...

BERNADINE

(o.s.; machine)

Robin this is Bernie! First off... sit down

112 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

112

We SEE a black woman's HAND rubbing an arm, two other HANDS rubbing both feet...

...PULL BACK to see Gloria, her face covered by an oxygen mask, in the hospital bed, tubes coming out everywhere. EVERYBODY is standing around her: Tarik is holding her hand. Marvin stroking her hair. Bernie and Robin at her feet. Savannah gently massaging her leg. Gloria's eyes are glassy, as she looks out at all of them...

GLORIA (VOICE OVER)
I guess I'm not dead.

Marvin relaxes his hand on Gloria's head, leans down and whispers into her ear...

MARVIN
Can you hear me, baby?

Answering him with her eyes...

GLORIA (VOICE OVER)
I can hear everything. Why can't I talk?

MARVIN
You should be proud of your son.

Tarik takes his Mama's hand and squeezes it tight.

TARIK
One time, I pass up a date to finish my homework...

Tears stand in his eyes...

TARIK
Believe me, Ma, I'm gonna do it more often.

Gloria looks up at him.

GLORIA (VOICE OVER)
I can't tell him what I feel. Look in my eyes. Can you see it...?

MARVIN
You're gonna be fine, baby. The doctor's got everything under control.

Now the women are crying, wiping their eyes on Gloria's sheet, each other's sleeves, shoulders. Whatever.

GLORIA (VOICE OVER)
Now don't go getting all mushy on me...Thank you for being here...

(CONTINUED)

112 CONTINUED:

112

...and they each take turns giving her kisses on the cheek, except for Marvin, who kisses her hands and then her neck.

113 EXT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - 4:00 A.M.

113

Marvin and Tarik are sound asleep in chairs, side by side. Marvin's hand has fallen almost protectively over Tarik's thigh.

Savannah enters FRAME, carrying two hospital blankets, and gently puts one over each man. Tucks it tenderly behind Marvin's shoulders. Looks at him for a beat. Turns and walks off, lighting a cigarette as she...

...walks down the shiny tiled corridor and sees Robin's on a pay phone. Doesn't want to disturb her, takes two successive drags on her cigarette and starts pacing in little circles.

Robin notices Savannah. Murmurs into the phone...

ROBIN

You kiss Daddy for me. I'll call you tomorrow.

...and she places the phone gently in its cradle. Savannah looks up and sees her staring back. Their look holds as Robin walks over to her. Savannah watches Robin glance up at the "No Smoking" sign. Robin reaches, takes the cigarette out of Savannah's mouth. Instead of throwing it away, Robin takes a drag of her own and puts the cigarette back between Savannah's lips...

SAVANNAH

You know. I owe you an apology.

Robin's not sure what she means by this.

SAVANNAH

I've been dogging you behind your back since I met you...

Dogging me?

SAVANNAH

...you know, about the way you are... were with men.

Oh.

ROBIN

(emerging smile)

Well that's not entirely true. Sometimes, you dogged me right to my face.

(CONTINUED)

113 CONTINUED:

113

Savannah just stares at her. As if deciding whether to say...

SAVANNAH

I mean, I've been doing the same damn thing. It was just easier to see it on you.

Robin knows this. Steps a little closer.

ROBIN

Can't stop lying to ourselves until we know we're doing it. And once we do, nothing in the world could make us start again.

Savannah's a little dumbstruck by the clarity of that.

ROBIN

(smiles)

...almost like we passed a test we didn't know we were taking.

Savannah reaches out and places her hands softly on Robin's belly. Robin puts her hand on top of Savannah's, rubs until we know they can feel each other's warmth.

SAVANNAH

You know this baby's gonna have more than one Mama don't you?

Yes. And Robin slides her free hand around Savannah's neck, pulls her into a slow, deep hug until they rock back and forth. Back and forth.

114
thru
119

OMITTED

114
thru
119

DISSOLVE TO:

120 INT. RANGE ROVER - NIGHT

120

Bernie's driving, Savannah's up front with her. Gloria sits in back with Robin who's clearly very pregnant. Everybody's dressed to kill. It's NEW YEAR'S EVE. MUSIC thumping from the radio, as...

...we begin to see hundreds of people lining up outside a nightclub

ANNOUNCER

Let's kick off the new year with a blast from the past. It was the summer of '92 and George Howard was asking the question: Do I Ever Cross Your Mind...

(CONTINUED)

120 CONTINUED:

120

The women know this song. It's beautiful. Familiar. Almost too much. Bernie pulls up to the Valet and as Savannah opens her door to get out, Bernie reaches over and grasps her by the shoulder. Robin and Gloria both look at Bernie. What are you doing? For a second Bernie doesn't say anything. Do anything. And then...

BERNIE

Let's not do this.

Savannah looks at her friend. Doesn't get it.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Things ain't moving fast enough for you tonight? Got no plans. Got no where to go? Don't fret. Don't stop. We're fifteen minutes away from a brand new year. So do this for me. Do it for yourself...here's KEEP ON MOVING from Soul II Soul... do that...

...HEAR the song as we...

SAND WIPE TO:

120A EXT. LAKE - NIGHT

120A

HEADLIGHTS from the Range Rover light up the sand, cast a silver satin mirror out into the black water. The RADIO is on as loud as it goes and over the music, we hear, LAUGHTER and SPLASHING as we PAN OVER the sand past high heels, pantyhose, purses, a balled up scarf with a pile of jewelry at its center, as we...

...see Robin in the water tying the hem of her dress up under her belly. Bernie and Savannah gallop through the water, getting drenched and not caring one iota. They look free. Gloria even has some pep in her step because she begins to dance alone on the sand when we hear...

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Three minutes and it'll be a brand new year. If you're sad. Get glad. If you're mad. Get even. If it ain't broke. Don't fix it. But whatever you do, do something. This year. Don't be afraid. I'll let Oleta Adams tell you why 'Everything Must Change'...be right back atcha with the 1995 countdown...

...the women acknowledge this song and each other by slowing down. Gloria begins to gather dried twigs and the other women join in until there is a pile. Bernie lights the fire and the women stand around in the YELLOW-REDDISH circle of light and stare at the fire.

(CONTINUED)

120A CONTINUED:

120A

...we hear SCREAMING from Times Square. But here, there is only each other. Now the COUNTDOWN...

RADIO

Nine, eight seven six...

...the women simply look at each other's face...

RADIO

...three two ONE!

...the SCREAMING and CHEERING and NOISEMAKERS become increasingly LOUD. The women move around the fire. To each other.

And they hug.

FADE TO BLACK

ROLL END CREDITS

THE END



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